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MINOR VICTORIAN POETS

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MINOR VICTORIAN POETS

EDITED BY

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Professor of English
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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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19662

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INTRODUCTION

I

Political and Social Backgrounds

After the battle of Waterloo, England became occupied once more with the solution of domestic problems and resumed her program of reform. Warned by the example of the French Revolution, and apprehensive of the return of Napoleon, Parliament turned heedful though sometimes reluctant ear to the voice of the common people. During the remainder of the century England saw unprecedented progress in the spread of democracy, through the extension of the franchise; in the creation of a more humanitarian attitude; and in the liberalization of her colonial policy.

In 1832, Lord John Russel succeeded in persuading Parliament to pass the first of the great Reform Acts. Through the disenfranchisement of fifty-six rotten boroughs, representation in Parliament was extended to many towns which had never before enjoyed this privilege, and the property qualification for voting was considerably reduced. As a result of the agitation of the Trade Unions and the Chartist Movement, these reforms were carried still further in 1867 and 1884 until practically universal suffrage was realized. The Industrial Revolution was responsible for a great deal of unhappiness and discontent. Many men were thrown out of employment through labor-saving devices; women and children became their competitors in tending machines; the standards of living of the laboring classes

were kept pitifully low; and the idle turned to crime as a means of support. The returning soldiers and sailors augmented the ranks of unemployed. To make matters worse, in 1815 a tax was placed upon the importation of grain which kept prices up and led to the enriching of a small landed class at the expense of the industrial consumer. Riots and acts of sabotage became so frequent that many leaders feared a great revolution, and thought that the only way to prevent one was to take a strong hand in repressing the first signs of outbreak. Soon, however, the radicals (those who wished to get at the roots of the trouble) and liberals made themselves felt in the introduction of moderate reform measures. Among the first of these was the repeal (1823-1824) of capital punishment as the penalty for a great many minor offenses. In 1833, laws, the first of a long series, were passed for the protection of women and children employees in factories and mines. In 1846, after a bitter struggle, the Corn Laws were repealed.

As the lower and middle classes became more prosperous and took over a larger share in the government, it became imperative that they should be better educated. Previous to 1833 the education of poor children was left entirely in the hands of schools established by societies of both the established and the dissenting churches. In that year Parliament passed the first Government Grant for the support of the schools of both groups. Other grants were made in succeeding years; between 1870 and 1880 attendance upon the elementary schools was made compulsory. Higher education was advanced through the founding of secondary schools, municipal universities, and working men's colleges. As the reward of the research of such men as Sir Humphry Davy, Michael Faraday, Thomas Young,

Hans Christian Oersted, J. P. Joule, Thomas Henry Huxley, Alfred Russel Wallace, Charles Darwin, and others great progress was made in the sciences, particularly in physics and biology. In 1825, George Stephenson demonstrated the practicability of using steam as a motive force in drawing trains of cars. *The Great Western* began to ply between Liverpool and New York in 1838. The penny postage system was inaugurated in 1839. Between 1837 and 1842 the telegraph came into general use.

In religion three tendencies are apparent: the influence of the Oxford movement; the liberalizing tendency abetted, at least, by the supposed conflict between religion and science; and the gradual development of a greater spirit of tolerance. The Oxford movement was an attempt by a group of University men—many of them fellows of Oriel College—to quicken the spiritual torpor, into which many of the Established churches had fallen, in order to combat rationalism. It seemed to them that the English people were in danger of forgetting the sovereignty of God; in their sermons and pamphlets—"tracts"—they stressed the unbroken continuity of the apostolic succession and the infallible authority of Christianity. Even after some of the more extreme leaders had become enamored with and had transferred their allegiance to the Catholic Church and there was bitter dissension in its ranks, the movement continued to exert great influence. Two of its ministers, Bishop Wilberforce and Dr. Pusey, were foremost in the opposition against evolution that followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859. Not directly related to the Movement, but originating in somewhat the same way, was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Just as the Tractarians had been inspired and attracted by the simplicity, sincerity, and

spiritual beauty of the Medieval Church, so was a band of artists impressed with the simplicity, sincerity, and individuality of the early painters. The Brotherhood, organized in 1848, resolved to throw off the restraints of tradition and convention in order to copy nature more simply and with attention to detail as the painters before Raphael had done.

The first half of our period witnessed a great deal of agitation on the part of individuals, communities, labor unions, and chartist organizations to obtain the extension of the franchise and more humanitarian laws for the protection of the individual. The second half experienced no less imperative entreaties in the form of insurrections, mutinies, and rebellions for more equitable government in Great Britain's dependencies in India, China, and South Africa. In the Great Jubilees of 1887 and 1897 attention was directed to the needs and achievements of the colonies. The degree to which Great Britain is learning to satisfy the needs of her subject and allied people was attested by the hearty response to her cry of need at the time of the World War. The whole era was a period of unparalleled political and social change and advancement. At no other time has there been so large a reading public nor so close a relationship between the literature of the period and the whole social structure of the time. In the minor poets this relationship is particularly close and significant.

II

Poets with Religious Motif

John Keble was a man of singularly devout spirit, patient kindliness, and undoubted sincerity. After winning double first honors at Corpus Christi College, he

became a fellow and tutor at Oriel, and later a curate of various charges. When he was thirty-five he published *The Christian Year,* a volume written with the purpose "of bringing his (the reader's) thoughts and feelings into more entire unison with those recommended and exemplified in the Prayer Book." The volume became at once, and has deservedly remained for more than a century, highly popular. In the poems one finds a sweet, quiet, childlike confidence expressed in simple language adorned with symbolism:

> When the soft dews of kindly sleep
> My wearied eyelids gently steep,
> Be my last thought, how sweet to rest
> For ever on my Savior's breast.

In his pastoral duties Keble burned with the desire to quicken the religious experiences of his flock. By general consent his sermon of July 14, 1833 is regarded as the direct begetter of the Oxford Movement.

Of this movement John Henry Newman soon became the acknowledged head and stands as its chief exponent and representative. As a boy, Newman gloried in Scott's romances; later he read with avidity the Church Fathers and became enamored with the gorgeous ritual and ceremony of the Medieval Church. Like Keble, he became a fellow of Oriel College; in 1832 as a result of difficulties with the provost of the College, he resigned and went abroad. At Leonforte he became violently ill with a fever and kept exclaiming: "I shall not die, I have a work to do." In June of the following year he left Palermo for Marseilles; becalmed for a week in the straits of Bonifacio, he wrote *Lead Kindly Light,* which many regard as the finest hymn of the language. After his return to

England, Newman gave up his living at Oxford and retired to almost monastic seclusion at Littlemore. The next few years were devoted to the promulgation of the Oxford Movement through the so-called *Tracts*. After he had joined the Catholic Church in 1845 there followed many bitter years of "doubt, hesitation, and Pain" between him and his old friends; the last years of his life were made happy by the general recognition of his high idealism, noble purpose, and sincerity. Most of his poems were written prior to 1833 although many times not published until years later. Second to *Lead Kindly Light* (*The Pillar of the Cloud*), his best and most characteristic poem is *The Dream of Gerontius* which is a kind of miracle play telling of the reception into heaven of the soul of a good Catholic. Varied religious experiences are treated in his poems; not infrequently he dwells upon the transitory nature of earthly joys in comparison with the manifold promises of the world to come.

The same theme appears repeatedly in the poems of Christina Rossetti who belongs to the middle and latter half of the century. In *Vanity of Vanities* she describes all pleasure as ending in sorrow:

> Ah woe is me for pleasure that is vain
> Ah woe is me for glory that is past!
> Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
> Glory that at the last bringeth no gain.

Disappointment in love may have strengthened her feeling of renunciation and resignation. With the utmost faith in the hereafter, death inspired in her no fear, but was regarded as the haven of rest and peace in *Dreamland* and the song *When I am dead my dearest*. Whereas Newman worked himself gradually and con-

sciously into harmony with the mysticism of the Medieval Church, Miss Rossetti was a born ascetic. Her poems are spontaneous, and at the same time faultless in technique and diction; melancholy, but not pessimistic or funereal; sweet and wistful, but not sentimental. While her poems intrigue one with their simplicity and artless grace, the longer and more pretentious poems of Francis Thompson overawe one with their majestic, sublime, and sustained language and style. *The Hound of Heaven* deals with divine love in its relations with the wilful and erring human soul. The poem abounds with the richest and most gorgeous imagery dependent in many lines, upon the happy choice of words. Thompson's preoccupation with mystical religion marks him as the true and great descendant of the seventeenth century religious poets, and distinguishes him sharply from most of his materialistic contemporaries in the last decade of the century. In his shorter poems one finds naïve grace, delicacy, and beauty of detail.

III

Poets of Doubt, Disbelief, and Pessimism

The negative influence of the Oxford Movement is reflected in the poetry of Arthur Hugh Clough. From Charleston, South Carolina, Clough was sent to England to be educated and in time passed under the influence of Rugby and Dr. Thomas Arnold. For most boys the moral teaching of Dr. Arnold was undoubtedly a wholly good experience; Clough was lonesome, an unusually conscientious and responsive lad, and of a somewhat mercurial temperament. The spirit of Rugby played upon his emotions to an unhealthy degree; he built for himself aircastles of idealism which fell before

contact with the world and overwhelmed him in their ruins. In one of his poems *Blank Misgivings* he cries out:

> How often sit I, poring o'er
> My strange distorted youth,
> Seeking in vain, in all my store
> One feeling based on truth;

After gaining practically every honor at Rugby, including the scholarship to Balliol College, he went to Oxford in 1837 and found himself in the midst of the turmoil occasioned by the Oxford Movement. At first he fell under the lure of the Great Tractarians, but after two years experienced a reaction under which his religious faith was shaken to its very foundations. Thereafter he passed through a long period of mental suffering—perchance he was thinking of these years of anguish when he wrote *In the Depths*:

> Our ills are worse than at their ease
> These blameless happy souls suspect,
> They only study the disease,
> Alas, who live not to detect.

While he was unable longer to subscribe to his earlier and more orthodox beliefs, he never became hostile to conventional religion and seemed always to regret the necessary break. Further unhappiness was caused by what seemed to him the needlessly slow and laborious progress of human society. That he was able to preserve some hope and confidence in the final triumph of Truth is expressed in the stanzas *Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth*:

> For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
> Seem here no painful inch to gain,

For back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

The same problems that troubled Clough, vexed the mind of his younger companion, Matthew Arnold. In their earlier years, the experiences of the two men were remarkably similar. Both went from Rugby to Balliol College, fell under the influence of the Tractarian Movement, and experienced loss of faith. Arnold possessed a different temperament, and while his feeling of disillusionment was no less keen, was more successful in re-establishing his philosophy of life. He characterizes the century as an "iron time"

Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears

and regrets that man is beset by the strange disease of modern life

With its sick hurry, its divided aims
Its head o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts.

Arnold finds relief in Greek philosophy and counsels man to look for aid within himself:

Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery

for *Empedocles on Etna*

These hundred doctors try
To preach thee to their school.

We have the truth! they cry;
And yet their oracle,
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine.

For himself, Arnold finds peace in retirement, not to cloistered life as portrayed in *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse,* but in quiet employment as described in *Quiet Work* and *Second Best.* Probably this period of storm and stress was largely responsible for the grave and melancholy note to be found in most of his poems, not in his prose which was written later, after he had practically stopped writing poetry. As regards contemporary poets, he was indebted chiefly to Wordsworth, Goethe, and Senancour, the author of *Obermann.* His principal literary masters, however, were to be found among the Greeks; to the query "who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?" he names Homer, Sophocles, and Epictetus. No poet of the nineteenth century better represents the true Greek spirit than does Arnold in his "classic restraint, clarity, and sense of proportion." Fire and spontaneity are wanted to make him a great lyric poet; in one type of poem, the elegy, he excels, and no poet has left a better group of elegies than *A Southern Night, Rugby Chapel, The Scholar Gypsy,* and *Thyrsis.* For the most part his long narrative poems, such as *Sohrab and Rustum,* show a prudent handling of wisely selected material. His

sonnets are perfect in technique and mildly diverting though seldom capable of stirring the emotions.

An attitude of increasing skepticism ending in stark though reluctant disbelief is reflected in the later poetry of James Thomson. That he was not abnormal by nature seems probable from a study of his early life, and one could not ask for a happier, more carefree spirit than that expressed in a number of his poems. But twice disappointed in love, sick, and addicted to intemperance, he finds no object for living and plays with the possibility of suicide. More than anyone else in English literature he probes the uttermost depths of darkness in *The City of Dreadful Night.* In the *Proem* he addresses others who, like himself, have been compelled to live in the city of Melancholy:

"Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;

"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

The poem is characterized by imagery of the highest degree of intensity drawn from a fervid imagination.

Untoward personal experiences may have been largely responsible for Thomson's pessimism and despair, not such is the explanation of Thomas Hardy's fatalistic and melancholy attitude toward life. After making his reputation as one of the very greatest English realistic novelists, Hardy returned to his early muse and in 1898 published his first volume of verse. As in his later novels, he depicts man as the hapless pawn of circumstance. Rather than deny the existence of God he

stresses God's indifference to the needs and wants of man; in *God-Forsaken* he conceives of the world as having been created by God and then abandoned in disgust as a miserable experiment because of the overweening presumption of earth's pitiful race. The irony impregnating man's daily existence is admirably illustrated in the little poem *At Tea*. Again and again, as in *The Church Builder*, the character of a poem seeks death to end the misunderstanding and hopeless failure of his life. Hardy seldom interposes conscious interpretation or comment; he is satisfied to present in direct, unadorned, faultless language a clear-cut picture of the universe as he has perceived it. Writing at the very close of our period, he represents the gloomy reaction to the outburst of joy and optimism characteristic of the first part of the era.

In the poems of A. E. Housman the note of sadness and disillusionment is no less discernible, but is in a minor key and is less cosmic in subject. As a pastoral poet Housman laments the misfortunes of country youths and maidens. Frequently the subject is a soldier-boy who is about to go forth to return no more. Lovers must soon part; youths die, and learn that their sweethearts have found solace with their former rivals. Housman writes his poems with a sure hand; their lyric power as well as pure and perfect language have already given them a secure place as classics.

IV

E. B. Browning, Fitzgerald, and Patmore

It is not difficult to account for Elizabeth Barrett Browning's popularity among her contemporaries. She gave spontaneous, optimistic, and unrestrained lyrical

expression to whatever was foremost in the public mind. *The Cry of the Children* voices the popular indignation at the mistreatment of children in mines and factories; *Casa Guidi Windows* expresses her sympathy with Italy's struggle for freedom. The very merits which endeared her, at the same time led to her most characteristic faults. Unrestrained ardor is likely to lapse into extravagance, unreality, and diffuseness, and generally appears flat after the heat of the moment has cooled. She was not always careful to make clear exactly what she meant. Her art was defective in allowing her to write too loosely and to ramble on at too great length, as in *The Cry of the Children*. From her invalid's couch she not always saw life "steadily and as a whole." It was a great moment for her when she first came in contact with Robert Browning.

> The face of all the world is changed, I think
> Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
> Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
> Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
> Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
> Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
> Of life in a new rhythm. . . .

His vitality served as a powerful tonic for her health and their love satisfied and enriched her emotional nature. As the poetical fruition of their love we have the *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which endure as the permanent portion of her work and mark her as second only to Sappho among women poets. The set form and rigorous demands of the sonnet served to correct the most serious of her poetical failings. In the series she has left a full confession, sincerely and faith-

fully recorded, of the significance to her of their love. In them a woman has unlocked and revealed her heart.

Any survey of the Victorian Period would be incomplete unless attention were directed to Edward Fitzgerald's version of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám. These quatrains purport to be translations from the Persian astronomer-poet: how much belongs to Omar and how much to Fitzgerald has been the subject of innumerable studies and of hours of discussion. In this as in other translations, Fitzgerald seems to have taken the greatest liberties with his text in his concern to reproduce the spirit rather than the letter of the original, and probably has succeeded in enhancing to no slight degree the literary merits of his source. At any rate, Fitzgerald is responsible for making the *Rubáiyát* the modern exponent of Epicurean philosophy. Time flies:

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise
One thing at least is certain—This life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies;

enjoy the present:

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine;

to-morrow we die, and no one will be concerned for us:

When you and I behind the veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the world shall last,
Which of our coming and departure heeds
As the Seven Seas should heed a pebble cast.

Coventry Patmore assumed the rôle of bard of the hearth and celebrated fortunate nuptial love in the separate parts of *The Angel in the House* which were published during the ten year period 1853-1863. The subject appealed to Mid-Victorian taste and was read with much the same interest as *Barchester Towers* and *Cranford*. Patmore was regarded seriously and hailed as a great poet by his contemporaries who did not fail, however, to recognize the besetting faults of the poem. Much of the narrative sinks to fluent, trivial commonplace, and is couched in a monotonous meter. Many of the lyrics stand out for their sententious charm. The *Odes*, published in 1868 and later in enlarged form as *The Unknown Eros*, show greater condensation, were written in a complicated stanza ode, and often contain real intensity of feeling as in *The Azalea* and *Departure* in which he expresses his poignant longing for the departed.

V

Poets Dominated Chiefly by Artistic Impulse

The principal interest uniting the poets treated in this section was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Perhaps it would be better to say that the same figure, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, dominated both groups; yet it is true that the writers, no less than the painters, were attempting to break away from rigid discipline in their desire to express greater individuality. The Brotherhood was organized in 1848; the first number of *The Germ*, devoted to the illustration of its artistic and literary tenets, appeared on the first of January, 1850. Rossetti was the one figure interested in both painting and writing. In *The Germ*, which survived for only

four numbers, appeared two of his best and most characteristic poems, *My Sister's Sleep* and *The Blessed Damozel.* Both show a high degree of intensity and sublimity; much of the vividness is obtained through the discriminating and profuse use of concrete detail. *The Blessed Damozel* shows the highest descriptive power and in addition has a romantic and supernatural strain. The two poems are representative of all his work. In his appeal to the eye and other senses, Rossetti is reminiscent of Keats and Coleridge. Sometimes, as in *Troy Town,* he carries the sensuous appeal too far for many tastes; this tendency led to considerable criticism under the term "The fleshly School of Poetry." Rossetti was interested in beauty, not truth; and was indifferent to and oblivious of social, religious, and political movements of the century. On occasion he could tell a good story as in *The White Ship* or *A Last Confession.* His sonnets are melodious and rich in imagery.

As a direct influence of Rossetti's personality, William Morris, and through him Charles Algernon Swinburne, became interested in the aims of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Morris was an Oxford man and for a time published the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* in which many of Rossetti's poems were published. Morris ever stands out as the practical and versatile patron of arts and literature. The influence of Rossetti is seen especially in the first volume of poems, published in 1858. In his treatments of Arthurian and other medieval subjects, Morris attempts to keep the characters true to their time rather than make them Mid-Victorian men and women as did his great contemporary. Two of his most successful lyrics: *The Gilliflower of Gold* and *Two Red Roses Across the Moon* belong to this period. In his later work Chaucer

supplants Rossetti as his chief literary master. Morris often shows good taste in his selection of subjects which he treats faultlessly as regards proportion and verse; he seldom attains to great depth or intensity of feeling. He wrote too easily but has, nevertheless, produced a great many very readable narrative poems on themes selected, at will, from classical, medieval, or Scandinavian sources.

No two poets could be less alike than Morris and Swinburne, the retiring, neo-pagan aesthete. Possibly no poet in English literature has been more completely dedicated to poetry. Within this field, however, Swinburne had a variety of interests: the Pre-Raphaelite abhorrence of conventional traditions, not their zest for all things medieval; earlier English poets, particularly Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and W. S. Landor; all of Greek Literature—especially the dramatists; and French writers, Victor Hugo above the rest. In general, Swinburne had little concern with contemporary events; the Italian struggle for freedom was an exception which fired his enthusiasm. Though Swinburne had no lack of intellectual interests which are reflected in his poems, it is not for these that he is remembered, but for the unrivaled charm of his music. He was an innovator in adapting and introducing foreign meters and stanza forms into English. He could write most exquisite French verse. Finally, his own poetry is characterized by the most splendid "energy, fire, and rapidity."

The third personal friend and warm admirer of the Pre-Raphaelites was George Meredith who tried his hand at verse before writing novels. Perhaps to a higher degree than any of the others, Meredith attains to an attitude of independence of thought which at times leads him, unfortunately, to little less than complete isolation from his fellowmen. Too much has been made, how-

ever, of the difficult philosophy in some of his longer meditative poems and of occasional perverse lines. Meredith is a classicist inclined toward realism. His shorter lyrics show a restraint, not an absence or lack of passion and emotion, and are beautiful for their proportion, rugged but not inelegant language, and depth of thought. Many of his longer narrative poems are alive with homely wisdom, dependent upon an accurate observation of human life and nature. Meredith will always be deservedly popular with those who take the time to study him.

VI

Poets of Realism

Realism plays a minor rôle in the poetry of the Victorian era. It was a time of extremes; men were either exuberantly glad and hopeful or dismally disappointed and pessimistic. Kipling, in his *Departmental Ditties* and *Barrack Room Ballads,* usually selects realistic subjects and episodes which he treats in simple, familiar verse forms in the language of the street; his most lasting appeal is made as the poet of England's imperialism in *The Ballad of East and West, The White Man's Burden,* and *Recessional,* or of homely, human-appeal philosophy as in *If*—and *When Earth's Last Picture is Painted.* Two other unmistakable forerunners of Masefield and Gibson appear in the last quarter of the century: William Ernest Henley and John Davidson. Henley was a journalist by profession; Davidson, a dramatist; and both had difficulty in catching the public ear. Henley possessed the greater mastery of his medium; whether writing in French forms, rhymeless free verse, or in conventional meters, whatever he wrote

was good. The success of the *In Hospital* poems is largely due to their vividness—attained through skilful choice of words and the discriminating sense of knowing when enough has been said. In philosophy he was something of a stoic as appears in the famous *Invictus* and in *What is to come.* Davidson is sufficiently eclectic in his choice of subject—ranging from medieval legends to nineteenth century industrialism and modern inventions. His best poems are his blank verse ballads though they are very uneven in quality. They always show a high intensity of feeling and usually present a gloomy atmosphere and often an ironical view of life.

It is difficult to place Robert Louis Stevenson in any of the above groups. Stevenson wrote his poetry as recreation; he never dedicated himself to verse as he did to the mastery of prose style. Many of his poems, like *To Andrew Lang,* are occasional and playful in tone. His children's poems have become classics and have almost established a new type of literature; they are the cheerful, natural expression of a child's thought; written from the memory of his own childhood, they give testimony to his poetic imagination. The ballads are the work of a master story-teller and abound with Stevensonian felicitous phrases. When he half-shyly allows himself to be sententious, we see his own cheerful, charitable personality:

> If I have faltered more or less
> In my great task of happiness;
> If I have moved among my race
> And shown no glorious morning face;
> If beams from happy human eyes
> Have moved me not; if morning skies,
> Books, and my food, and summer rain

Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
Lord, Thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose Thou, before that Spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

JOHN D. COOKE

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JOHN KEBLE

JOHN KEBLE

1792 Born at Fairford; with younger brother received early education from father.

1806 Matriculated at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

1811 Won double first honors, and a Fellowship at Oriel College.

1818 Became a College Tutor, and was curate of several small parishes.

1825 Accepted curacy at Fairford, where he lived with his father and two sisters.

1827 Published *The Christian Year* at the earnest solicitation of his father who wished to see the material in book form before he died; *The Christian Year* went through ninety-five editions during Keble's life-time.

Was considered for Provost-ship of Oriel College; position was given to Edward Hawkins.

1831–41 Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

1833 July 14, preached sermon on National Apostasy which started Oxford Movement, in which he was associated with J. H. Newman, R. H. Froude, E. B. Pusey, H. J. Rose, W. G. Ward, Wm. Palmer, and others. Wrote seven of the *Tracts of the Times*.

1835–6 Appointed to vicarage of Hursley, where he performed his pastoral duties most conscientiously until a short time before his death.

1845 *Lyra Innocentium*, a volume of poems, was published.

Attempted to secure foundation for Poor Man's College for education of clergy; in 1870 efforts bore fruition in establishment of Keble College, Oxford.

1866 Died at Bournemouth.

From THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

EVENING

Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

—*St. Luke* xxiv, 29

'Tis gone, that bright and orbèd blaze,
Fast fading from our wistful gaze;
Yon mantling cloud has hid from sight
The last faint pulse of quivering light.

In darkness and in weariness
The traveller on his way must press,
No gleam to watch on tree or tower
Whiling away the lonesome hour.

Sun of my soul! Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near:
Oh! may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes!

When round Thy wondrous works below
My searching rapturous glance I throw,
Tracing out Wisdom, Power, and Love,
In earth or sky, in stream or grove;—

Or by the light Thy words disclose
Watch Time's full river as it flows,
Scanning Thy gracious Providence,
Where not too deep for mortal sense:—

When with dear friends sweet talk I hold,
And all the flowers of life unfold;
Let not my heart within me burn,
Except in all I Thee discern.

When the soft dews of kindly sleep
My wearied eyelids gently steep,
Be my last thought, how sweet to rest
For ever on my Saviour's breast.

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live:
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.

Thou framer of the light and dark,
Steer through the tempest Thine own ark:
Amid the howling wintry sea
We are in port if we have Thee.*

The Rulers of this Christian land,
'Twixt Thee and us ordained to stand,—
Guide Thou their course, O Lord, aright,
Let all do all as in Thy sight.

Oh! by Thine own sad burthen, borne
So meekly up the hill of scorn,
Teach Thou Thy Priests their daily cross
To bear as Thine, nor count it loss!

If some poor wandering child of Thine
Have spurn'd, today, the voice divine,
Now, Lord, the gracious work begin;
Let him no more lie down in sin.

* Then they willingly received Him into the ship; and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went. *St. John* vi, 21.

Watch by the sick: enrich the poor
With blessings from Thy boundless store:
Be every mourner's sleep tonight
Like infant's slumbers, pure and light.

Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take;
Till in the ocean of Thy love
We lose ourselves in Heaven above.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE SECRET OF PERPETUAL YOUTH

Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now. *St. John* ii, 10.

THE heart of childhood is all mirth:
We frolic to and fro
As free and blithe, as if on earth
Were no such thing as woe.

But if indeed with reckless faith
We trust the flattering voice,
Which whispers, "Take thy fill ere death,
"Indulge thee and rejoice";

Too surely every setting day,
Some lost delight we mourn,
The flowers all die along our way,
Till we, too, die forlorn.

Such is the world's gay garish feast,
In her first charming bowl
Infusing all that fires the breast,
And cheats th' unstable soul.

And still, as loud the revel swells,
The fever'd pulse beats higher,
Till the sear'd taste from foulest wells
Is fain to slake its fire.

Unlike the feast of heavenly love
Spread at the Saviour's word
For souls that hear His call, and prove
Meet for His bridal board.

Why should we fear youth's draught of joy,
If pure, would sparkle less?
Why should the cup the sooner cloy,
Which God hath deign'd to bless?

For, is it Hope, that thrills so keen
Along each bounding vein,
Still whispering glorious things unseen?—
Faith makes the vision plain.

The world would kill her soon: but Faith
Her daring dreams will cherish,
Speeding her gaze o'er time and death
To realms where nought can perish.

Or is it Love, the dear delight
Of hearts that know no guile,
That all around see all things bright
With their own magic smile?

The silent joy, that sinks so deep,
Of confidence and rest,
Lull'd in a father's arms to sleep,
Clasp'd to a mother's breast?

Who, but a Christian, through all life
That blessing may prolong?
Who, through the world's sad day of strife,
Still chant his morning song?

Fathers may hate us or forsake,
God's foundlings then are we:
Mother on child no pity take,*
But we shall still have Thee.

We may look home, and seek in vain
A fond fraternal heart,
But Christ hath given His promise plain
To do a Brother's part.

Nor shall dull age, as worldlings say,
The heavenward flame annoy:
The Saviour cannot pass away,
And with Him lives our joy.

Ever the richest tenderest glow
Sets round th' autumnal sun—
But there sight fails: no heart may know
The bliss when life is done.

Such is thy banquet, dearest Lord;
O give us grace to cast
Our lot with Thine, to trust Thy word,
And keep our best till last.

* Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. *Isaiah* xlix, 15.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

THE ROSE-BUD

Joseph made haste; for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there. *Genesis* xliii, 30.

There stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. *Genesis* xlv, 1.

When Nature tries her finest touch,
  Weaving her vernal wreath,
Mark ye, how close she veils her round,
Not to be trac'd by sight or sound,
  Nor soil'd by ruder breath?

Who ever saw the earliest rose
  First open her sweet breast?
Or, when the summer sun goes down,
The first soft star in evening's crown
  Light up her gleaming crest?

Fondly we seek the dawning bloom
  On features wan and fair—
The gazing eye no change can trace,
But look away a little space,
  Then turn, and, lo! 'tis there.

But there's a sweeter flower than e'er
  Blush'd on the rosy spray—
A brighter star, a richer bloom
Than e'er did western heaven illume
  At close of summer day.

'Tis Love, the last best gift of Heaven;
Love gentle, holy, pure:
But tenderer than a dove's soft eye,
The searching sun, the open sky,
She never could endure.

Even human Love will shrink from sight
Here in the coarse rude earth:
How then should rash intruding glance
Break in upon *her* sacred trance
Who boasts a heavenly birth?

So still and secret is her growth,
Ever the truest heart,
Where deepest strikes her kindly root
For hope or joy, for flower or fruit,
Least knows its happy part.

God only, and good angels, look
Behind the blissful screen—
As when, triumphant o'er His woes,
The Son of God by moonlight rose,
By all but Heaven unseen:

As when the holy Maid beheld
Her risen Son and Lord:
Thought has not colors half so fair
That she to paint that hour may dare,
In silence best ador'd.

The gracious Dove, that brought from Heaven
The earnest of our bliss,
Of many a chosen witness telling,
On many a happy vision dwelling,
Sings not a note of this.

So, truest image of the Christ,
  Old Israel's long-lost son,
What time, with sweet forgiving cheer,
He call'd his conscious brethren near,
  Would weep with them alone.

He could not trust his melting soul
  But in his Maker's sight—
Then why should gentle hearts and true
Bare to the rude world's withering view
  Their treasure of delight!

No—let the dainty rose awhile
  Her bashful fragrance hide—
Rend not her silken veil too soon,
But leave her, in her own soft noon,
  To flourish and abide.

CATECHISM

Oh! say not, dream not, heavenly notes
  To childish ears are vain,
That the young mind at random floats,
  And cannot reach the strain.

Dim or unheard, the words may fall,
  And yet the heaven-taught mind
May learn the sacred air, and all
  The harmony unwind.

Was not our Lord a little child,
  Taught by degrees to pray,
By father dear and mother mild
  Instructed day by day?

And lov'd he not of Heaven to talk
With children in His sight,
To meet them in His daily walk,
And to His arms invite?

What though around His throne of fire
The everlasting chant
Be wafted from the seraph choir
In glory jubilant?

Yet stoops He, ever pleas'd to mark
Our rude essays of love,
Faint as the pipe of wakening lark,
Heard by some twilight grove:

Yet is He near us, to survey
These bright and order'd files,
Like spring-flowers in their best array,
All silence and all smiles,

Save that each little voice in turn
Some glorious truth proclaims,
What sages would have died to learn,
Now taught by cottage dames.

And if some tones be false or low,
What are all prayers beneath
But cries of babes, that cannot know
Half the deep thought they breathe?

In His own words we Christ adore,
But angels, as we speak,
Higher above our meaning soar
Than we o'er children weak:

And yet His words mean more than they,
  And yet He owns their praise:
Why should we think He turns away
  From infant's simple lays?

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

1801 Born in London; early education at private school at Ealing.

1816 Entered Trinity College, Oxford.

1819 Studied law at Lincoln's Inn.

1822–45 Fellow of Oriel College; 1826–31, Tutor.

1824–29 Curate of St. Clement's, Oxford; 1825–6, Vice-Principal of Alban Hall; 1828–43, Vicar of St. Mary's, Oxford.

1831 Disagreement with Edward Hawkins, Provost of Oriel College; resigned as Tutor; 1832–3 travelled on Continent with R. H. Froude.

1833 Published *The Arians of the Fourth Century.*
Joined the Oxford or Tractarian Movement; in the following eight years wrote twenty-nine of the *Tracts of the Times,* including No. 90, which stated: "The Articles do not oppose Catholic teaching; they but partially oppose Roman dogma; they, for the most part, oppose the dominant errors of Rome." This number was much discussed and led to dissension among the Tractarians.

1842 Retired from Oxford; lived in seclusion at Littlemore.

1845 Received into Catholic Church; in the following year, went to Rome, where he was ordained a Priest and received D.D. degree.

1848 Founded Oratory at Birmingham; 1850, Oratory in London.

1852 Published *The Idea of A University;* 1854, went to Dublin to head Catholic University.

1864 Published *The Dream of Gerontius,* written years before; and *Apologia pro Vita Sua* in answer to criticism of Kingsley and others.

1868 Published *Verses on Various Occasions.*

1877 Made Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford.

1879 Created Cardinal of Catholic Church

1890 Died at Edgbaston.

A PICTURE

The maiden is not dead, but sleepeth.

She is not gone;—still in our sight
That dearest maid shall live,
In form as true, in tints as bright,
As youth and health could give.

Still, still is ours the modest eye;
The smile unwrought by art;
The glance that shot so piercingly
Affection's keenest dart;

The thrilling voice, I ne'er could hear
But felt a joy and pain;—
A pride that she was ours, a fear
Ours she might not remain;

Whether the page divine called forth
Its clear, sweet, tranquil tone,
Or cheerful hymn, or seemly mirth
In sprightlier measure shown;

The meek inquiry of that face,
Musing on wonders found,
As 'mid dim paths she sought to trace
The truth on sacred ground;

The thankful sigh that would arise,
When aught her doubts removed,
Full sure the explaining voice to prize,
Admiring while she loved;

The pensive brow, the world might see
When she in crowds was found;
The burst of heart, the o'erflowing glee
When only friends were round;

Hope's warmth of promise, prompt to fill
The thoughts with good in store,
Match'd with content's deep stream, which still
Flow'd on, when hope was o'er;

That peace, which, with its own bright day,
Made cheapest sights shine fair;
That purest grace, which track'd its way
Safe from aught earthly there.

Such was she in the sudden hour
That brought her Maker's call,—
Proving her heart's self-mastering power
Blithely to part with all,—

All her eye loved, all her hand press'd
With keen affection's glow,
The voice of home, all pleasures best,
All dearest thoughts below.

From friend-lit hearth, from social board,
All duteously she rose;
For faith upon the Master's word
Can find a sure repose.

And in her wonder up she sped,
And tried relief in vain;
Then laid her down upon her bed
Of languor and of pain,—

And waited till the solemn spell,
(A ling'ring night and day),
Should fill its numbers, and compel
Her soul to come away.

Such was she then; and such she is,
Shrined in each mourner's breast;
Such shall she be, and more than this
In promised glory blest;

When in due lines her Saviour dear
His scattered saints shall range,
And knit in love souls parted here,
Where cloud is none, nor change.

THE SAINT AND THE HERO

O AGED Saint! far off I heard
The praises of thy name;—
Thy deed of power, thy prudent word,
Thy zeal's triumphant flame.

I came and saw; and, having seen,
Weak heart, I drew offence
From thy prompt smile, thy simple mien,
Thy lowly diligence.

The Saint's is not the Hero's praise;—
This I have found, and learn
Nor to malign Heaven's humblest ways,
Nor its least boon to spurn.

SENSITIVENESS

Time was, I shrank from what was right
From fear of what was wrong;
I would not brave the sacred fight,
Because the foe was strong.

But now I cast that finer sense
And sorer shame aside;
Such dread of sin was indolence,
Such aim at Heaven was pride.

So, when my Saviour calls, I rise
And calmly do my best;
Leaving to Him, with silent eyes
Of hope and fear, the rest.

I step, I mount where He has led;
Men count my haltings o'er;—
I know them; yet, though self I dread,
I love His precept more.

HUMILIATION

I have been honour'd and obey'd,
I have met scorn and slight;
And my heart loves earth's sober shade,
More than her laughing light.

For what is rule but a sad weight
Of duty and a snare?
What meanness, but with happier fate
The Saviour's Cross to share?

This my hid choice, if not from heaven,
Moves on the heavenward line;
Cleanse it, good Lord, from earthly leaven,
And make it simply Thine.

REVERSES

When mirth is full and free,
Some sudden gloom shall be;
When haughty power mounts high,
The Watcher's axe is nigh.
All growth has bound; when greatest found,
It hastes to die.

When the rich town, that long
Has lain its huts among,
Uprears its pageants vast,
And vaunts—it shall not last!
Bright tints that shine, are but a sign
Of summer past.

And when thine eye surveys,
With fond adoring gaze,
And yearning heart, thy friend—
Love to its grave doth tend.
All gifts below, save truth, but grow
Towards an end.

THE PILLAR OF THE CLOUD

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene,—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor pray'd that Thou
Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power has blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

ZEAL AND MEEKNESS

Christ bade His followers take the sword;
And yet He chid the deed,
When hasty Peter seized His word,
And made a foe to bleed.

The gospel Creed, a sword of strife,
Meek hands alone may rear;
And ever Zeal begins its life
In silent thought and fear.

Ye, who would weed the Vineyard's soil,
Treasure the lesson given;
Lest in the judgment-books ye toil
For Satan, not for heaven.

THE TWO WORLDS

Unveil, O Lord, and on us shine
In glory and in grace;
This gaudy world grows pale before
The beauty of Thy face.

Till Thou art seen, it seems to be
A sort of fairy ground,
Where suns unsetting light the sky,
And flowers and fruits abound.

But when Thy keener, purer beam
Is pour'd upon our sight,
It loses all its power to charm,
And what was day is night.

Its noblest toils are then the scourge
Which made Thy blood to flow;
Its joys are but the treacherous thorns
Which circled round Thy brow.

And thus, when we renounce for Thee
Its restless aims and fears,
The tender memories of the past,
The hope of coming years,

Poor is our sacrifice, whose eyes
Are lighted from above;
We offer what we cannot keep,
What we have ceased to love.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

1806 Born; lived during early years at Hope End, Herefordshire, in large, picturesque house with Moorish windows; recollections of her happy childhood are echoed in *Little Ellie* and *Hector in the Garden.* Was precocious; at eight could read Homer in Greek.

1820 Father printed *Battle of Marathon,* one of her early poems. When she was fifteen, in trying to saddle her pony, she was injured and became an invalid for many years.

1826 Published *Essay on Mind.*

1833 Published first version of her translation of *Prometheus Bound.*

1838 *The Seraphim* appeared.

1844 Published two volumes of *Poems.*

1846 Married Robert Browning, contrary to the wishes of her father who regarded her as a confirmed invalid; in the following year, settled in Florence in the Casa Guidi. In 1849, their son was born.

1850 Published *Sonnets from the Portuguese* which had been written before her marriage; "Portuguese" was a pet name which Browning had given her.
Was mentioned for the Laureate-ship.

1851 *Casa Guidi Windows,* dealing with Italy's struggle for freedom, appeared.

1857 *Aurora Leigh,* a novel in verse, was published.

1860 Published *Poems before Congress.*

1861 Died in Florence.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

I

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang,—"Not Death, but Love."

II

BUT only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. "Nay" is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,

Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to play thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.

Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The gray dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Belovèd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! go.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue

God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colors from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done

To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX

Can it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts of mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . *I love thee*—in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel,* across the inferior features

Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI

And therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII

Indeed this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own:
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,

And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!

But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

XV

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,

I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII

I never gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully,
I ring out to the full brown length and say
"Take it." My day of youth went yesterday:
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more; it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but love is justified,—

Take it thou, finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX

The soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet's forehead to my heart
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purply black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart,
The bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth;
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX

Belovèd, my Belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white

Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem "a cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit

A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV

Let the world's sharpness, like a clasping knife,
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm.
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer,

Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI

I LIVED with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
Belovèd what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendors (better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts),
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame

My soul with satisfaction of all wants:
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII

My own Beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee;* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.

And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Beloved, is it thou
Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's Amen.
Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,

For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose:
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love;—more like an out-of-tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float

'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cow-slips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought, break from solitude;
Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
Not as to a single good, but all my good!

Lay thy hands on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

When we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.

And Love, be false! if *he,* to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII

Pardon, oh pardon, that my soul should make,
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills asnort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
Slow to world-greetings, quick with its "Oh, list,"
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down

In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, "My love, my own."

XXXIX

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me
(Against which years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains), and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race,—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heaven,—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighborhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—
Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!

XL

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Belovèd! thou canst wait

Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry "Too late."

XLI

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall
To hear my music in its louder parts
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
To hearken what I said between my tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII

"My future will not copy fair my past"—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,

And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the world!

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

Belovèd, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colors true,
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
  Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
  With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
  From the deep cool bed of the river:
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
  Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan
  While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
  To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
  (How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
  In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan
  (Laughed while he sat by the river),

"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

EDWARD FITZGERALD

EDWARD FITZGERALD

1809 Born near Woodbridge, Suffolk, the third son of John Purcell, who, after the death of his wife, took the name and arms of Fitzgerald.

1826 Entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was the contemporary of Thackeray and Tennyson. He was a friend of the former; did not become acquainted with Tennyson until later. Took his degree in 1830.

After leaving Cambridge, Fitzgerald lived most of his life very quietly in Suffolk in or near Boulge and Woodbridge. He spent his time in reading or writing to his numerous friends. Smoking, boating, and gardening were his chief diversions.

1853 Published *Six Dramas of Calderon, freely translated by Edward Fitzgerald*, the only work to bear his name on the title page.

1859 Published the first edition of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. The book attracted little attention until Rossetti and Swinburne happened to come upon it in a book-stall.

1876 Published a translation of the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus; later he translated the *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus Coloneus* of Sophocles.

1883 Died.

THE RUBÁIYÁT OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

I

Wake! For the Sun who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
  Drives Night along with them from Heav'n and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
  "When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

III

And, as the cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
  You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
  Where the White Hand of Moses on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows;
  But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehleví, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
  Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
  The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
  The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
  And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to supper—heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
  Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
  Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
  How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
  And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
  That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
  Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XXI

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the Cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regret and future Fears:
  To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
  Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
  Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
  Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To-DAY prepare,
And those that after some To-MORROW stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor There."

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same Door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence,* like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither,* willy-nilly blowing.

XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
  Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
  And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see:
  Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
  Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
  A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay;
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup,
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
  Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
  And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
  Think then you are To-day what Yesterday
You were—To-morrow you shall not be less.

XLIII

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
  And offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
  Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultán to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultán rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki from the Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sev'n Seas should heed a pebble-cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reacht
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
  Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like, eludes your pains;
  Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
  Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
  You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute;
  Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—Nay,
'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic Absolute
The Two and Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
  Of fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
  A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
  Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

LXIII

O threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies;
  One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
  Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
  Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

LXVI

I sent my soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
  And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell:"

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
  Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
  Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
  Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay they did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
To-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink, for you know not why you go, nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
  Of Heav'n Parwín and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul.

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
  Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
  One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
  Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
  Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh, the sorry trade!

LXXX

O Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
  Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

LXXXI

O Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
  For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

. . . . . .

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-Stricken Ramazán away,
  Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
  And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
"My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
  "And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
"Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
"Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
"And He that with his hand the Vessel made
"Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make;
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
"What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXXXVII

Whereat someone of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
"Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
"Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
"The luckless Pots he marr'd in making—Pish!
"He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

LXXXIX

"Well," murmured one, "Let whoso make or buy,
"My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
"But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
"Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
"Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

. . . . . .

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One-half so precious as the stuff they sell.

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XCVII

Would but the desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveler might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some wingéd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remould it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

. . . . . .

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
  How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

CI

And when like her, O Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
  And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

1819 Born at Liverpool; when he was four years old the family crossed the Atlantic to live in Charleston, South Carolina.

1828 Returned to England; went to school in Chester and later to Rugby. Became the favorite pupil of Dr. Thomas Arnold; distinguished himself as editor of the school magazine and as a runner and swimmer. Won a scholarship to Balliol College.

1837 Went to Oxford; became the friend of W. G. Ward, J. H. Newman, J. C. Shairp, and Benj. Jowett. Surprised and disappointed his friends in taking only second honors in the examinations.

1842 Elected Fellow of Oriel and afterwards (1843) Tutor; was eminently successful as an instructor.

1848 Resigned positions at Oxford because of feeling on religious questions; wrote and published *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich,* a long pastoral poem in hexameters; and traveled on the Continent 1848–9.

1849 Assumed duties as head of University Hall, London; soon resigned; published Ambarvalia. Began *Dipsychus* (1849–50).

1852 Went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he mingled with the Cambridge and Concord groups of writers and thinkers; taught private students; and worked on a translation of Plutarch's *Lives.*

1853 Returned to England to become an Examiner in the Education Office.

1861 Died, in Florence. Was at work on the *Mari Magno* tales.

IN A LECTURE-ROOM

Away, haunt thou not me,
Thou vain Philosophy!
Little hast thou bestead,
Save to perplex the head,
And leave the spirit dead.
Unto thy broken cisterns wherefore go,
While from the secret treasure-depths below,
Fed by the skiey shower,
And clouds that sink and rest on hilltops high,
Wisdom at once, and Power,
Are welling, bubbling forth, unseen, incessantly?
Why labor at the dull mechanic oar,
When the fresh breeze is blowing,
And the strong current flowing,
Right onward to the Eternal Shore?

τὸ καλόν

I have seen higher, holier things than these,
And therefore must to these refuse my heart,
Yet am I panting for a little ease;
I'll take, and so depart.

Ah, hold! the heart is prone to fall away,
Her high and cherished visions to forget,
And if thou takest, how wilt thou repay
So vast, so dread a debt?

How will the heart, which now thou trustest, then
Corrupt, yet in corruption mindful yet,

Turn with sharp stings upon itself? Again,
Bethink thee of the debt!

—Hast thou seen higher, holier things than these,
And therefore must to these thy heart refuse?
With the true best, alack, how ill agrees
That best that thou would'st choose!

The Summum Pulchrum rests in heaven above;
Do thou, as best thou may'st, thy duty do:
Amid the things allowed thee live and love;
Some day thou shalt it view.

QUA CURSUM VENTUS

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so, but why the tale reveal
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered—
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass guides—
To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze; and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there!

THE QUESTIONING SPIRIT

The human spirits saw I on a day,
Sitting and looking each a different way;
And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,
Another spirit went around the ring
To each and each: and as he ceased his say,
Each after each, I heard them singly sing,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,
We know not—what avails to know?
We know not—wherefore need we know?
This answer gave they still unto his suing,
We know not, let us do as we are doing.
Dost thou not know that these things only seem?—
I know not, let me dream my dream.
Are dust and ashes fit to make a treasure?—

I know not, let me take my pleasure.
What shall avail the knowledge thou hast sought?—
I know not, let me think my thought.

What is the end of strife?—
I know not, let me live my life.
How many days or e'er thou mean'st to move?—
I know not, let me love my love.
Were not things old once new?—
I know not, let me do as others do.
And when the rest were over past,
I know not, I will do my duty, said the last.

Thy duty do? rejoined the voice,
Ah, do it, do it, and rejoice;
But shalt thou then, when all is done,
Enjoy a love, embrace a beauty
Like these, that may be seen and won
In life, whose course will then be run;
Or wilt thou be where there is none?
I know not, I will do my duty.

And taking up the word around, above, below,
Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,
We know not, sang they all, nor ever need we know.
We know not, sang they, what avails to know?
Whereat the questioning spirit, some short space,
Though unabashed, stood quiet in his place.
But as the echoing chorus died away
And to their dreams the rest returned apace,
By the one spirit I saw him kneeling low,
And in a silvery whisper heard him say:

Truly, thou know'st not, and thou need'st not know;
Hope only, hope thou, and believe alway;
I also know not, and I need not know,
Only with questionings pass I to and fro,
Perplexing these that sleep, and in their folly
Inbreeding doubt and sceptic melancholy;

Till that, their dreams deserting, they with me
Come all to this true ignorance and thee.

BETHESDA

A SEQUEL

I saw again the spirits on a day,
Where on the earth in mournful case they lay;
Five porches were there, and a pool, and round,
Huddling in blankets, strewn upon the ground,
Tied-up and bandaged, weary, sore and spent,
The maimed and halt, diseased and impotent.

For a great angel came, 't was said, and stirred
The pool at certain seasons, and the word
Was, with this people of the sick, that they
Who in the waters here their limbs should lay
Before the motion on the surface ceased
Should of their torment straightway be released.
So with shrunk bodies and with heads down-dropped,
Stretched on the steps, and at the pillars propped,
Watching by day and listening through the night,
They filled the place, a miserable sight.

And I beheld that on the stony floor
He too, that spoke of duty once before,
No otherwise than others here to-day,
Foredone and sick and sadly muttering lay.
"I know not, I will do—what is it I would say:
What was that word which once sufficed alone for all,
Which now I seek in vain, and never can recall?"
And then, as weary of in vain renewing
His question, thus his mournful thought pursuing,
"I know not, I must do as other men are doing."

But what the waters of that pool might be,
Of Lethe were they, or Philosophy;
And whether he, long waiting, did attain
Deliverance from the burden of his pain
There with the rest; or whether, yet before,
Some more diviner stranger passed the door
With his small company into that sad place,
And breathing hope into the sick man's face,
Bade him take up his bed, and rise and go,
What the end were, and whether it were so,
Further than this I saw not, neither know.

IN THE DEPTHS

It is not sweet content, be sure,
That moves the nobler Muse to song,
Yet when could truth come whole and pure
From hearts that inly writhe with wrong?

'T is not the calm and peaceful breast
That sees or reads the problem true;
They only know, on whom 't has prest
Too hard to hope to solve it too.

Our ills are worse than at their ease
These blameless happy souls suspect,
They only study the disease,
Alas, who live not to detect.

IN THE GREAT METROPOLIS

Each for himself is still the rule;
We learn it when we go to school—
The devil take the hindmost, O!

And when the schoolboys grow to men,
In life they learn it o'er again—
The devil take the hindmost, O!

For in the church, and at the bar,
On 'Change, at court, wher'er they are,
The devil takes the hindmost, O!

Husband for husband, wife for wife,
Are careful that in married life
The devil takes the hindmost, O!

From youth to age, whate'er the game,
The unvarying practice is the same—
The devil takes the hindmost, O!

And after death, we do not know,
But scarce can doubt, wher'er we go,
The devil takes the hindmost, O!

Ti rol de rol, ti rol de ro,
The devil takes the hindmost, O!

THE LATEST DECALOGUE

Thou shalt have one God only; who
Would be at the expense of two?
No graven images may be
Worshipped, except the currency:
Swear not at all; for, for thy curse
Thine enemy is none the worse:
At church on Sunday to attend
Will serve to keep the world thy friend:
Honor thy parents: that is, all

From whom advancement may befall;
Thou shalt not kill; but need'st not strive
Officiously to keep alive:
Do not adultery commit;
Advantage rarely comes of it:
Thou shalt not steal; an empty feat,
When it's so lucrative to cheat:
Bear not false witness; let the lie
Have time on its own wings to fly:
Thou shalt not covet, but tradition
Approves all forms of competition.

From DIPSYCHUS

"THERE is no God," the wicked saith,
"And truly it's a blessing,
For what He might have done with us
It's better only guessing."

"There is no God," a youngster thinks,
"Or really, if there may be,
He surely did not mean a man
Always to be a baby."

"There is no God, or if there is,"
The tradesman thinks, "'t were funny
If He should take it ill in me
To make a little money."

"Whether there be," the rich man says,
"It matters very little,
For I and mine, thank somebody,
Are not in want of victual."

Some others, also, to themselves,
Who scarce so much as doubt it,
Think there is none, when they are well
And do not think about it.

But country folks who live beneath
The shadow of the steeple;
The parson and the parson's wife,
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,
So thankful for illusion;
And men caught out in what the world
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost every one when age,
Disease, or sorrows strike him,
Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like Him.

Afloat; we move. Delicious! Ah,
What else is like the gondola?
This level floor of liquid glass
Begins beneath us swift to pass.
It goes as though it went alone
By some impulsion of its own.
(How light it moves, how softly! Ah,
Were all things like the gondola!)

How light it moves, how softly! Ah,
Could life, as does our gondola,
Unvexed with quarrels, aims, and cares,
And moral duties and affairs,

Unswaying, noiseless, swift and strong,
Forever thus—thus glide along!
(How light we move, how softly! Ah,
Were life but as the gondola!)

With no more motion than should bear
A freshness to the languid air;
With no more effort than exprest
The need and naturalness of rest,
Which we beneath a grateful shade
Should take on peaceful pillows laid!
(How light we move, how softly! Ah,
Were life but as the gondola!)

In one unbroken passage borne
To closing night from opening morn,
Uplift at whiles slow eyes to mark
Some palace front, some passing bark;
Through windows catch the varying shore,
And hear the soft turns of the oar!
(How light we move, how softly! Ah,
Were life but as the gondola!)

So live, nor need to call to mind
Our slaving brother here behind!

Our gaieties, our luxuries,
  Our pleasures and our glee,
Mere insolence and wantonness,
  Alas! they feel to me.

How shall I laugh and sing and dance?
  My very heart recoils,

While here to give my mirth a chance
A hungry brother toils.

The joy that does not spring from joy
Which I in others see,
How can I venture to employ,
Or find it joy for me?

SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

EASTER DAY

NAPLES, 1849

I

THROUGH the great sinful streets of Naples as I past,
With fiercer heat than flamed above my head
My heart was hot within me; till at last
My brain was lightened when my tongue had said—
Christ is not risen!

Christ is not risen, no—
He lies and moulders low;
Christ is not risen!

What though the stone were rolled away, and though
The grave found empty there?—
If not there, then elsewhere;
If not where Joseph laid Him first, why then
Where other men
Translaid Him after, in some humbler clay.
Long ere today
Corruption that sad perfect work hath done,
Which here she scarcely, lightly had begun:
The foul engendered worm
Feeds on the flesh of the life-giving form
Of our most Holy and Anointed One.
He is not risen, no—
He lies and moulders low;
Christ is not risen!

What if the women, ere the dawn was grey,
Saw one or more great angels, as they say
(Angels, or Him himself)? Yet neither there, nor then,

Nor afterwards, nor elsewhere, nor at all,
Hath He appeared to Peter or the Ten;
Nor, save in thunderous terror, to blind Saul;
Save in an after Gospel and late Creed,
He is not risen, indeed,—
Christ is not risen!

Or, what if e'en, as runs a tale, the Ten
Saw, heard, and touched, again and yet again?
What if at Emmaüs' inn, and by Capernaum's Lake,
Came One, the bread that brake—
Came one that spake as never mortal spake,
And with them ate, and drank, and stood, and walked about?
Ah! 'some' did well to 'doubt'!
Ah! the true Christ, while these things came to pass,
Nor heard, nor spake, nor walked, nor lived, alas!
He was not risen, no—
He lay and mouldered low,
Christ was not risen!

As circulates in some great city crowd
A rumour changeful, vague, importunate, and loud,
From no determined centre, or of fact
Or authorship exact,
Which no man can deny
Nor verify;
So spread the wondrous fame;
He all the same
Lay senseless, mouldering, low:
He was not risen, no—
Christ was not risen!

Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
As of the unjust, also of the just—
Yea, of that Just One, too!

This is the one sad Gospel that is true—
Christ is not risen!

Is He not risen, and shall we not rise?
Oh, we unwise!
What did we dream, what wake we to discover?
Ye hills, fall on us, and ye mountains, cover!
In darkness and great gloom
Come ere we thought it is *our* day of doom;
From the cursed world, which is one tomb,
Christ is not risen!

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss:
There is no heaven but this;
There is no hell,
Save earth, which serves the purpose doubly well,
Seeing it visits still
With equalest apportionment of ill
Both good and bad alike, and brings to one same dust
The unjust and the just
With Christ, who is not risen.

Eat, drink, and die, for we are souls bereaved:
Of all the creatures under heaven's wide cope
We are most hopeless, who had once most hope,
And most beliefless, that had most believed.
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust;
As of the unjust, also of the just—
Yea, of that Just One too!
It is the one sad Gospel that is true—
Christ is not risen!

Weep not beside the tomb,
Ye women, unto whom
He was great solace while ye tended Him;
Ye who with napkin o'er the head

And folds of linen round each wounded limb
Laid out the Sacred Dead;
And thou that bar'st Him in thy wondering womb;
Yea, Daughters of Jerusalem, depart,
Bind up as best ye may your own sad bleeding heart:
Go to your homes, your living children tend,
Your earthly spouses love;
Set your affections *not* on things above,
Which moth and rust corrupt, which quickliest come to end:
Or pray, if pray ye must, and pray, if pray ye can,
For death; since dead is He whom ye deemed more than man,
Who is not risen: no—
But lies and moulders low—
Who is not risen!

Ye men of Galilee!
Why stand ye looking up to heaven, where Him ye ne'er may see,
Neither ascending hence, nor returning hither again?
Ye ignorant and idle fishermen!
Hence to your huts, and boats, and inland native shore,
And catch not men, but fish;
Whate'er things ye might wish,
Him neither here nor there ye e'er shall meet with more.
Ye poor deluded youths, go home,
Mend the old nets ye left to roam,
Tie the split oar, patch the torn sail:
It was indeed an 'idle tale'—
He was not risen!

And, oh, good men of ages yet to be,
Who shall believe *because* ye did not see—

Oh, be ye warned, be wise!
No more with pleading eyes,
And sobs of strong desire,
Unto the empty vacant void aspire,
Seeking another and impossible birth
That is not of your own and only mother earth.
But if there is no other life for you,
Sit down and be content, since this must even do:
He is not risen!

One look, and then depart,
Ye humble and ye holy men of heart;
And ye! ye ministers and stewards of a Word
Which ye would preach, because another heard—
Ye worshippers of that ye do not know,
Take these things hence and go:—
He is not risen!

Here, on our Easter Day
We rise, we come, and lo! we find Him not,
Gardener nor other, on the sacred spot:
Where they have laid Him there is none to say;
No sound, nor in, nor out—no word
Of where to seek the dead or meet the living Lord.
There is no glistering of an angel's wings,
There is no voice of heavenly clear behest:
Let us go hence, and think upon these things
In silence, which is best.
Is He not risen? No—
But lies and moulders low?
Christ is not risen?

EASTER DAY

II

So IN the sinful streets, abstracted and alone,
I with my secret self held communing of mine own.
So in the southern city spake the tongue
Of one that somewhat overwildly sung,
But in a later hour I sat and heard
Another voice that spake—another graver word.
Weep not, it bade, whatever hath been said,
Though He be dead, He is not dead.
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

Weep not beside His tomb,
Ye women unto whom
He was great comfort and yet greater grief;
Nor ye, ye faithful few that wont with Him to roam,
Seek sadly what for Him ye left, go hopeless to your home;
Nor ye despair, ye sharers yet to be of their belief;
Though He be dead, He is not dead,
Nor gone, though fled,
Not lost, though vanished;
Though He return not, though
He lies and moulders low;
In the true creed
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

Sit if ye will, sit down upon the ground
Yet not to weep and wail, but calmly look around.
Whate'er befell,
Earth is not hell;

Now, too, as when it first began,
Life is yet life, and man is man.
For all that breathe beneath the heaven's high cope,
Joy with grief mixes, with despondence hope.
Hope conquers cowardice, joy grief:
Or at least, faith unbelief.
Though dead, not dead;
Not gone, though fled;
Not lost, though vanished.
In the great gospel and true creed,
He is yet risen indeed;
Christ is yet risen.

QUI LABORAT, ORAT

O ONLY Source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-encentered thought,
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropped, if then this earthly mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;
Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, thou shalt unnamed forgive,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,
Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes
In recognition start.

But, as thou willest, give or e'en forbear
The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blessed, that humbler prayer
Approach Thee morn and night.

"THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY"

What we, when face to face we see
The Father of our souls, shall be,
John tells us, doth not yet appear;
Ah! did he tell what we are here!

A mind for thoughts to pass into,
A heart for loves to travel through,
Five senses to detect things near,
Is this the whole that we are here?

Rules baffle instincts—instincts rules,
Wise men are bad—and good are fools,
Facts evil—wishes vain appear,
We cannot go, why are we here?

O may we for assurance' sake,
Some arbitrary judgment take,
And wilfully pronounce it clear,
For this or that 'tis we are here?

Or is it right, and will it do,
To pace the sad confusion through,
And say:—It doth not yet appear,
What we shall be, what we are here?

Ah yet, when all is thought and said,
The heart still overrules the head;
Still what we hope we must believe,
And what is given us receive;

Must still believe, for still we hope
That in a world of larger scope,
What here is faithfully begun
Will be completed, not undone.

My child, we still must think, when we
That ampler life together see,
Some true result will yet appear
Of what we are, together, here.

AH! YET CONSIDER IT AGAIN!

'Old things need not be therefore true,'
O brother men, nor yet the new;
Ah! still awhile the old thought retain,
And yet consider it again!

The souls of now two thousand years
Have laid up here their toils and fears,
And all the earnings of their pain,—
Ah, yet consider it again!

We! what do we see? each a space
Of some few yards before his face;

Does that the whole wide plan explain?
Ah, yet consider it again!

Alas! the great world goes its way,
And takes its truth from each new day;
They do not quit, nor can retain,
Far less consider it again.

NOLI AEMULARI

In controversial foul impureness
The peace that is thy light to thee
Quench not: in faith and inner sureness
Possess thy soul and let it be.

No violence—perverse—persistent—
What cannot be can bring to be;
No zeal what is make more existent,
And strife but blinds the eyes that see.

What though in blood their souls embruing,
The great, the good and wise they curse,
Still sinning, what they know not doing;
Stand still, forbear, nor make it worse.

By curses, by denunciation,
The coming fate they cannot stay;
Nor thou, by fiery indignation,
Though just, accelerate the day.

From SONGS IN ABSENCE

Ye flags of Piccadilly,
Where I posted up and down,

And wished myself so often
Well away from you and town,—

Are the people walking quietly
And steady on their feet,
Cabs and omnibuses plying
Just as usual in the street?

Do the houses look as upright
As of old they used to be,
And does nothing seem affected
By the pitching of the sea?

Through the Green Park iron railings
Do the quick pedestrians pass?
Are the little children playing
Round the plane-tree in the grass?

This squally wild north-wester
With which our vessel fights,
Does it merely serve with you to
Carry up some paper kites?

Ye flags of Piccadilly,
Which I hated so, I vow
I could wish with all my heart
You were underneath me now!

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

On sunny noons upon the deck's smooth face,
Linked arm in arm, how pleasant here to pace;
Or, o'er the stern reclining, watch below
The foaming wake far widening as we go.

On stormy nights when wild north-westers rave,
How proud a thing to fight with wind and wave!
The dripping sailor on the reeling mast
Exults to bear, and scorns to wish it past.

Where lies the land to which the ship would go?
Far, far ahead, is all her seamen know.
And where the land she travels from? Away,
Far, far behind, is all that they can say.

O SHIP, ship, ship,
  That travellest over the sea,
What are the tidings, I pray thee,
  Thou bearest hither to me?

Are they tidings of comfort and joy,
  That shall make me seem to see
The sweet lips softly moving
  And whispering love to me?

Or are they of trouble and grief,
  Estrangement, sorrow, and doubt,
To turn into torture my hopes,
  And drive me from Paradise out?

O ship, ship, ship,
  That comest over the sea,
Whatever it be thou bringest,
  Come quickly with it to me.

"WITH WHOM IS NO VARIABLENESS, NEITHER SHADOW OF TURNING"

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

THE HIDDEN LOVE

O let me love my love unto myself alone,
And know my knowledge to the world unknown;
No witness to my vision call,
Beholding, unbeheld of all;
And worship Thee, with Thee withdrawn apart,
Whoe'er, Whate'er Thou art,
Within the closest veil of mine own inmost heart.

What is it then to me
If others are inquisitive to see?
Why should I quit my place to go and ask
If other men are working at their task?
Leave my own buried roots to go
And see that brother plants shall grow;
And turn away from Thee, O Thou most Holy Light
To look if other orbs their orbits keep aright,
Around their proper sun,
Deserting Thee, and being undone.

O let me love my love unto myself alone,
And know my knowledge to the world unknown;
And worship Thee, O hid One, O much sought,

As but man can or ought,
Within the abstracted'st shrine of my least breathed on thought.

Better it were, thou sayest, to consent;
Feast while we may, and live ere life be spent;
Close up clear eyes, and call the unstable sure,
The unlovely lovely, and the filthy pure;
In self-belyings, self-deceivings roll,
And lose in Action, Passion, Talk, the soul.

Nay, better far to mark off thus much air,
And call it Heaven: place bliss and glory there;
Fix perfect homes in the unsubstantial sky,
And say, what is not, will be by-and-bye.

LIFE IS STRUGGLE

To WEAR out heart, and nerves, and brain,
And give oneself a world of pain;
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,
Imperious, supple—God knows what,
For what's all one to have or not;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,
It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,
And quite are sinking with the strain;—
Entirely, simply, undeceived,
Believe, and say we ne'er believed
The object, e'en were it achieved,
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;

With heart and soul to hold it cheap,
And then to go and try it again;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,
Only it is precisely this
That keeps us still alive.

IN A LONDON SQUARE

Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane,
East wind and frost are safely gone;
With zephyr mild and balmy rain
The summer comes serenely on;
Earth, air, and sun and skies combine
To promise all that's kind and fair:—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,
The winds of March were wild and drear,
And, nearing and receding still,
Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine.
Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, refrain thyself, and wait.

πάντα ῥεῖ-οὐδὲν μένει

Upon the water, in the boat,
I sit and sketch as down I float;
The stream is wide, the view is fair,
I sketch it looking backward there.

The stream is strong, and as I sit
And view the picture that we quit,
It flows and flows, and bears the boat,
And I sit sketching as we float.

Each pointed height, each wavy line,
To new and other forms combine;
Proportions vary, colours fade,
And all the landscape is remade.

Depicted neither far nor near,
And larger there and smaller here,
And varying down from old to new,
E'en I can hardly think it true.

Yet still I look, and still I sit,
Adjusting, shaping, altering it;
And still the current bears the boat
And me, still sketching as I float.

Still as I sit, with something new
The foreground intercepts my view;
Even the distant mountain range
From the first moment suffers change.

ALL IS WELL

Whate'er you dream, with doubt possessed,
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,
And lay you down and take your rest;
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,
And when you wake, to work again,
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;
Though how it will, and when, and where,
We cannot see, and can't declare.
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither, no one knows.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

MATTHEW ARNOLD

1822 Born at Laleham, the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold. Received early education at Winchester and Rugby.

1840 Won Balliol Scholarship and went to Oxford the following year. Won Hertford Scholarship in 1842; the Newdigate Prize for a poem on Cromwell in 1845. Like Clough, whose friend and admirer he was, he took only second honors.

1845 Became Fellow of Oriel College; resigned in 1852.

1847 Appointed private secretary to Lord Lansdowne.

1849 Published *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems.*

1851 Secured position as Inspector of Schools; in this capacity visited France, Germany, and Holland in 1856, 1865, and 1866. Held position until 1885.
Married Lucy Wightman.

1852 Published *Empedocles on Etna;* 1852, *Poems* (first series); and two years later, *Poems* (second series).

1857–67 Professor of Poetry at Oxford. In 1861, published *On Translating Homer,* a volume containing some of his lecture material. *Essays in Criticism* (first series) appeared in 1865.

1867 *New Poems* was published. During the last third of his life he abandoned poetry for prose; became a dictator in the field of criticism; and produced a number of notable works, among which may be mentioned *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *Essays in Criticism* (second series) (1888).

1869 Awarded an Honorary LL.D. degree at the University of Edinburgh; in 1870 Oxford bestowed an Hon. D. C. L. upon him; in 1883 Cambridge made him an Hon. LL. D.

1883 and 1886 Visited America on a lecture tour.

1888 Died at Liverpool.

QUIET WORK

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee—
One lesson which in every wind is blown;
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity—
Of toil unsever'd from tranquillity!
Of labour, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd in repose,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry!
Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,
Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil;
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

SHAKESPEARE

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask: Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality:
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst walk on earth unguess'd at. Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

"IN HARMONY WITH NATURE"

To a Preacher

"In harmony with Nature?" Restless fool,
Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
When true, the last impossibility,—
To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool!

Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more,
And in that *more* lies all his hopes of good.
Nature is cruel, man is sick of blood;
Nature is stubborn, man would fain adore;

Nature is fickle, man hath need of rest;
Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
Man would be mild and with safe conscience blest.

Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends,
Nature and man can never be fast friends.
Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Come, dear children, let us away;
Down and away below!
Now my brothers call from the bay,
Now the great winds shoreward blow,
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray
Children dear, let us away!
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—
Call once yet!
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear;
Children's voices, wild with pain—
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
"Mother dear, we cannot stay!
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more!
One last look at the white-wall'd town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore,
Then come down!
She will not come though you call all day;
Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam,
Where the salt weed sways in the stream,
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail and bask in the brine;

Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world for ever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She comb'd its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sigh'd, she look'd up through the clear green sea;

She said: "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore to-day.
'T will be Easter-time in the world—ah me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee."
I said: "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!"
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan;
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
Come!" I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-wall'd town;
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.
We climb'd on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,

And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded
panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone;
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah, she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were seal'd to the holy book!
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more!
Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!
Down to the depths of the sea!
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.
Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy!
For the priest and the bell, and the holy well;
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun!"
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh;
For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaiden
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children;
Come, children, come down!
The hoarse wind blows coldly;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing: "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starr'd with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanch'd sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hill-side—
And then come back down.
Singing: "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she!

She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

MEMORIAL VERSES

April, 1850

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come;
The last poetic voice is dumb—
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal Law.
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which serv'd for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said—
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the iron age
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear—
And struck his finger on the place
And said: *Thou ailest here, and here!*
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plung'd down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life;

He said: *The end is everywhere:*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we.
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth;
Smiles broke from us and we had ease.
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely-furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,

Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha! with thy living wave.
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

DESPONDENCY

The thoughts that rain their steady glow
Like stars on life's cold sea,
Which others know, or say they know,—
They never shone for me.

Thoughts light, like gleams, my spirit's sky,
But they will not remain.
They light me once, they hurry by,
And never come again.

SELF-DECEPTION

Say, what blinds us, that we claim the glory
Of possessing powers not our share?
—Since man woke on earth, he knows his story,
But, before we woke on earth, we were.

Long, long since, undower'd yet, our spirit
Roam'd, ere birth, the treasuries of God;
Saw the gifts, the powers it might inherit,
Ask'd an outfit for its earthly road.

Then, as now, this tremulous, eager being
Strain'd and long'd and grasp'd each gift it saw;
Then, as now, a Power beyond our seeing,
Staved us back, and gave our choice the law.

Ah, whose hand that day through Heaven guided
Man's new spirit, since it was not we?
Ah, who swayed our choice and who decided
What our gifts, and what our wants should be?

For, alas! he left us each retaining
Shreds of gifts which he refused in full.
Still these waste us with their hopeless straining,
Still the attempt to use them proves them null.

And on earth we wander, groping, reeling;
Powers stir in us, stir and disappear.
Ah! and he, who placed our master-feeling,
Fail'd to place that master-feeling clear.

We but dream we have our wish'd-for powers,
Ends we seek we never shall attain.
Ah! *some* power exists there, which is ours?
Some end is there, we indeed may gain?

SELF-DEPENDENCE

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,

At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:

"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!"

MORALITY

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 't were done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

Then, when the clouds are off the soul,
When thou dost bask in Nature's eye,
Ask, how *she* view'd thy self-control,
Thy struggling, task'd morality—
Nature, whose free, light, cheerful air,
Oft made thee, in thy gloom, despair.

And she, whose censure thou dost dread,
Whose eye thou wast afraid to seek,
See, on her face a glow is spread,
A strong emotion on her cheek!
"Ah, child!" she cries, "that strife divine,
Whence was it, for it is not mine?

"There is no effort on *my* brow—
I do not strive, I do not weep;

I rush with the swift spheres and glow
In joy, and when I will, I sleep.
Yet that severe, that earnest air,
I saw, I felt it once—but where?

"I knew not yet the gauge of time,
Nor wore the manacles of space;
I felt it in some other clime,
I saw it in some other place.
'Twas when the heavenly house I trod,
And lay upon the breast of God."

STANZAS IN MEMORY OF THE AUTHOR OF 'OBERMANN'

In front the awful Alpine track
Crawls up its rocky stair;
The autumn storm-winds drive the rack,
Close o'er it, in the air.

Behind are the abandoned baths
Mute in their meadows lone;
The leaves are on the valley paths;
The mists are on the Rhone—

The white mists rolling like a sea!
I hear the torrents roar.
—Yes, Obermann, all speaks of thee!
I feel thee near once more.

I turn thy leaves! I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll;
That air of languor, cold, and death,
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

Fly hence, poor wretch, whoe'er thou art,
Condemn'd to cast about,
All shipwreck in thy own weak heart,
For comfort from without!

A fever in these pages burns
Beneath the calm they feign;
A wounded human spirit turns,
Here, on its bed of pain.

Yes, though the virgin mountain air
Fresh through these pages blows,
Though to these leaves the glaciers spare
The soul of their white snows;

Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine;
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high-pasturing kine—

Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what ground tone
Of human agony.

Is it for this, because the sound
Is fraught too deep with pain,
That, Obermann! the world around
So little loves thy strain?

Some secrets may the poet tell,
For the world loves new ways.
To tell too deep ones is not well;
It knows not what he says.

Yet of the spirits who have reign'd
In this our troubled day,
I know but two, who have attain'd,
Save thee, to see their way.

By England's lakes, in grey old age,
His quiet home one keeps;
And one, the strong much-toiling sage,
In German Weimar sleeps.

But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate;
And Goethe's course few sons of men
May think to emulate.

For he pursued a lonely road,
His eye on nature's plan;
Neither made man too much a God,
Nor God too much a man.

Strong was he, with a spirit free
From mists, and sane, and clear;
Clearer, how much! than ours—yet we
Have a worse course to steer.

For though his manhood bore the blast
Of a tremendous time,
Yet in a tranquil world was pass'd
His tenderer youthful prime.

But we, brought forth and rear'd in hours
Of change, alarm, surprise—
What shelter to grow ripe is ours?
What leisure to grow wise?

Like children bathing on the shore,
Buried a wave beneath,
The second wave succeeds, before
We have had time to breathe.

Too fast we live, too much are tried,
Too harass'd, to attain
Wordsworth's sweet calm, or Goethe's wide
And luminous view to gain.

And then we turn, thou sadder sage!
To thee: we feel thy spell.
The hopeless tangle of our age—
Thou too hast scann'd it well.

Immoveable thou sittest; still
As death; compos'd to bear!
Thy head is clear, thy feeling chill—
And icy thy despair.

Yes, as the Son of Thetis said,
I hear thee saying now:
'Greater by far than thou are dead;
Strive not! die also thou!'—

Ah! two desires toss about
The poet's feverish blood.
One drives him to the world without,
And one to solitude.

The glow, he cries, *the thrill of life—*
Where, where do these abound?
Not in the world, not in the strife
Of men, shall they be found.

He who hath watch'd, not shar'd, the strife,
Knows how the day hath gone;
He only lives with the world's life
Who hath renounc'd his own.

To thee we come, then! Clouds are roll'd
Where thou, O Seer, art set;
Thy realm of thought is drear and cold—
The world is colder yet!

And thou hast pleasures too to share
With those who come to thee:
Balms floating on thy mountain air,
And healing sights to see.

How often, where the slopes are green
On Jaman, hast thou sate
By some high chalet-door, and seen
The summer day grow late;

And darkness steal o'er the wet grass
With the pale crocus starr'd,
And reach that glimmering sheet of glass
Beneath the piny sward,

Lake Leman's waters, far below:
And watch'd the rosy light
Fade from the distant peaks of snows;
And on the air of night

Heard accents of the eternal tongue
Through the pine branches play—
Listen'd, and felt thyself grow young;
Listen'd, and wept—Away!

Away the dreams that but deceive!
And thou, sad Guide, adieu!
I go; Fate drives me: but I leave
Half of my life with you.

We, in some unknown Power's employ,
Move on a rigorous line;
Can neither, when we will, enjoy;
Nor, when we will, resign.

I in the world must live:—but thou,
Thou melancholy Shade!
Wilt not, if thou can'st see me now,
Condemn me, nor upbraid.

For thou art gone away from earth,
And place with those dost claim,
The Children of the Second Birth
Whom the world could not tame;

And with that small transfigur'd band,
Whom many a different way
Conducted to their common land,
Thou learn'st to think as they.

Christian and pagan, king and slave,
Soldier and anchorite,
Distinctions we esteem so grave,
Are nothing in their sight.

They do not ask, who pin'd unseen,
Who was on action hurl'd,
Whose one bond is that all have been
Unspotted by the world.

There without anger thou wilt see
Him who obeys thy spell
No more, so he but rest, like thee,
Unsoil'd:—and so, Farewell!

Farewell!—Whether thou now liest near
That much-lov'd inland sea,
The ripples of whose blue waves cheer
Vevey and Meillerie,

And in that gracious region bland,
Where with clear-rustling wave
The scented pines of Switzerland
Stand dark round thy green grave,

Between the dusty vineyard walls
Issuing on that green place
The early peasant still recalls
The pensive stranger's face,

And stoops to clear thy moss-grown date
Ere he plods on again;—
Or whether, by maligner Fate,
Among the swarms of men,

Where between granite terraces
The blue Seine rolls her wave,
The Capital of Pleasure sees
Thy hardly-heard-of grave—

Farewell! Under the sky we part,
In this stern Alpine dell.
O unstrung will! O broken heart!
A last, a last farewell!

REVOLUTIONS

Before man parted for this earthly strand,
While yet upon the verge of heaven he stood,
God put a heap of letters in his hand,
And bade him make with them what word he could.

And man has turned them many times; made Greece,
Rome, England, France; yes, nor in vain essayed
Way after way, changes that never cease!
The letters have combined, something was made.

But ah! an inextinguishable sense
Haunts him that he has not made what he should;
That he has still, though old, to recommence,
Since he has not yet found the word God would.

And empire after empire, at their height
Of sway, have felt this boding sense come on;
Have felt their huge frames not constructed right,
And drooped, and slowly died upon their throne.

One day, thou say'st, there will at last appear
The word, the order, which God meant should be.
—Ah! we shall know *that* well when it comes near,
The band will quit man's heart, he will breathe free.

THE SECOND BEST

Moderate tasks and moderate leisure,
Quiet living, strict-kept measure
Both in suffering and in pleasure—
'Tis for this thy nature yearns.

But so many books thou readest,
But so many schemes thou breedest,
But so many wishes feedest,
That thy poor head almost turns.

And (the world's so madly jangled
Human things so fast entangled)
Nature's wish must now be strangled
For that best which she discerns.

So it *must* be! yet, while leading
A strain'd life, while overfeeding,
Like the rest, his wit with reading,
No small profit that man earns,

Who through all he meets can steer him,
Can reject what cannot clear him,
Cling to what can truly cheer him;
Who each day more surely learns

That an impulse, from the distance
Of his deepest, best existence,
To the words, "Hope, Light, Persistence,"
Strongly sets and truly burns.

REQUIESCAT

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes:
Ah; would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required:
She bath'd it in smiles of glee.

But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample Spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
The vasty Hall of Death.

EARLY DEATH AND FAME

For him who must see many years,
I praise the life which slips away
Out of the light, and mutely; which avoids
Fame, and her less fair followers, envy, strife,
Stupid detraction, jealousy, cabal,
Insincere praises; which descends
The quiet mossy track to age.

But when immature death
Beckons too early the guest
From the half-tried banquet of life,
Young, in the bloom of his days;
Leaves no leisure to press,
Slow and surely, the sweets
Of a tranquil life in the shade,—
Fuller for him be the hours!
Give him emotion, though pain!
Let him live, let him feel, *I have lived.*
Heap up his moments with life!
Triple his pulses with fame!

PHILOMELA

Hark! ah, the nightingale—
The tawny-throated!

Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark! what pain!

O wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewildered brain
That wild, unquenched, deep-sunken, old-world pain,
Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy racked heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold,
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and seared eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia,—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!

Again—thou hearest?
Eternal passion!
Eternal pain!

SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

And the first gray of morning fill'd the east,
And the fog rose out of the Oxus stream.
But all the Tartar camp along the stream
Was hush'd, and still the men were plunged in sleep;
Sohrab alone, he slept not; all night long
He had lain wakeful, tossing on his bed;
But when the gray dawn stole into his tent,
He rose, and clad himself, and girt his sword,
And took his horseman's cloak, and left his tent;
And went abroad into the cold wet fog,
Through the dim camp to Peran-Wisa's tent.

Through the black Tartar tents he pass'd, which stood
Clustering like beehives on the low flat strand
Of Oxus, where, the summer-floods o'erflow
When the sun melts the snows in high Pamere;
Through the black tents he pass'd, o'er that low strand,
And to a hillock came, a little back
From the stream's brink—the spot where first a boat,
Crossing the stream in summer, scrapes the land.
The men of former times had crown'd the top
With a clay fort; but that was fall'n, and now
The Tartars built there Peran-Wisa's tent,
A dome of laths, and o'er it felts were spread.
And Sohrab came there, and went in, and stood
Upon the thick piled carpets in the tent,
And found the old man sleeping on his bed
Of rugs and felts, and near him lay his arms,
And Peran-Wisa heard him, though the step
Was dull'd; for he slept light, an old man's sleep;

And he rose quickly on one arm, and said:—
"Who art thou? for it is not yet clear dawn.
Speak! is there news, or any night alarm?"
But Sohrab came to the bedside, and said:—
"Thou know'st me, Peran-Wisa! it is I.
The sun is not yet risen, and the foe
Sleep; but I sleep not; all night long I lie
Tossing and wakeful, and I come to thee.
For so did King Afrasiab bid me seek
Thy counsel, and to heed thee as thy son,
In Samarcand, before the army march'd;
And I will tell thee what my heart desires.
Thou know'st if, since from Ader-baijan first
I came among the Tartars and bore arms,
I have still served Afrasiab well, and shown,
At my boy's years, the courage of a man.
This too thou know'st, that while I still bear on
The conquering Tartar ensigns through the world,
And beat the Persians back on every field,
I seek one man, one man, and one alone—
Rustum, my father; who I hoped should greet,
Should one day greet, upon some well-fought field,
His not unworthy, not inglorious son.
So I long hoped, but him I never find.
Come then, hear now, and grant me what I ask.
Let the two armies rest to-day; but I
Will challenge forth the bravest Persian lords
To meet me, man to man; if I prevail,
Rustum will surely hear it; if I fall—
Old man, the dead need no one, claim no kin.
Dim is the rumor of a common fight,
Where host meets host, and many names are sunk;
But of a single combat fame speaks clear."
He spoke; and Peran-Wisa took the hand
Of the young man in his, and sigh'd, and said:—

"O Sohrab, an unquiet heart is thine!
Canst thou not rest among the Tartar chiefs,
And share the battle's common chance with us
Who love thee, but must press for ever first,
In single fight incurring single risk,
To find a father thou hast never seen?
That were far best, my son, to stay with us
Unmurmuring; in our tents, while it is war,
And when 'tis truce, then in Afrasiab's towns.
But, if this one desire indeed rules all,
To seek out Rustum—seek him not through fight!
Seek him in peace, and carry to his arms,
O Sohrab, carry an unwounded son!
But far hence seek him, for he is not here.
For now it is not as when I was young,
When Rustum was in front of every fray;
But now he keeps apart, and sits at home,
In Seistan, with Zal, his father old.
Whether that his own mighty strength at last
Feels the abhorr'd approaches of old age,
Or in some quarrel with the Persian King.
There go!—Thou wilt not? Yet my heart forebodes
Danger or death awaits thee on this field.
Fain would I know thee safe and well, though lost
To us; fain therefore send thee hence, in peace
To seek thy father, not seek single fights
In vain;—but who can keep the lion's cub
From ravening, and who govern Rustum's son?
Go, I will grant thee what thy heart desires."

So said he, and dropp'd Sohrab's hand, and left
His bed, and the warm rugs whereon he lay;
And o'er his chilly limbs his woollen coat
He pass'd, and tied his sandals on his feet,
And threw a white cloak round him, and he took
In his right hand a ruler's staff, no sword;

And on his head he set his sheep-skin cap,
Black, glossy, curl'd, the fleece of Kara-Kul;
And raised the curtain of his tent, and call'd
His herald to his side, and went abroad.
The sun by this had risen, and clear'd the fog
From the broad Oxus and the glittering sands.
And from their tents the Tartar horsemen filed
Into the open plain; so Haman bade—
Haman, who next to Peran-Wisa ruled
The host, and still was in his lusty prime.
From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream'd;
As when some gray November morn the files,
In marching order spread, of long-neck'd cranes
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes
Of Elburz, from the Aralian estuaries,
Or some frore Caspian reed-bed, south-ward bound
For the warm Persian sea-board—so they stream'd.
The Tartars of the Oxus, the King's guard,
First, with black sheep-skin caps and with long spears;
Large men, large steeds; who from Bokhara come
And Khiva, and ferment the milk of mares.
Next, the more temperate Toorkmuns of the south,
The Tukas, and the lances of Salore,
And those from Attruck and the Caspian sands;
Light men and on light steeds, who only drink
The acrid milk of camels, and their wells.
And then a swarm of wandering horse, who came
From far, and a more doubtful service own'd;
The Tartars of Ferghana, from the banks
Of the Jaxartes, men with scanty beards
And close-set skull-caps; and those wilder hordes
Who roam o'er Kipchak and the northern waste,
Kalmucks and unkempt Kuzzaks, tribes who stray
Nearest the Pole, and wandering Kirghizzes,
Who come on shaggy ponies from Pamere;

These all filed out from camp into the plain.
And on the other side the Persians form'd;—
First a light cloud of horse, Tartars they seem'd,
The Ilyats of Khorassan; and behind,
The royal troops of Persia, horse and foot,
Marshall'd battalions bright in burnish'd steel.
But Peran-Wisa with his herald came,
Threading the Tartar squadrons to the front,
And with his staff kept back the foremost ranks.
And when Ferood, who led the Persians, saw
That Peran-Wisa kept the Tartars back,
He took his spear, and to the front he came,
And check'd his ranks, and fix'd them where they stood.
And the old Tartar came upon the sand
Betwixt the silent hosts, and spake, and said:
"Ferood, and ye, Persians and Tartars, hear!
Let there be truce between the hosts to-day.
But choose a champion from the Persian lords
To fight our champion Sohrab, man to man."
As, in the country, on a morn in June,
When the dew glistens on the pearled ears,
A shiver runs through the deep corn for joy—
So, when they heard what Peran-Wisa said,
A thrill through all the Tartar squadrons ran
Of pride and hope for Sohrab, whom they loved.
But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,
That vast sky-neighboring mountain of milk snow;
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves
Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries—
In single file they move, and stop their breath,
For fear they should dislodge the o'erhanging snows—

So the pale Persians held their breath with fear.
And to Ferood his brother chiefs came up
To counsel: Gudurz and Zoarrah came,
And Feraburz, who ruled the Persian host
Second, and was the uncle of the King;
These came and counsell'd, and then Gudurz said:—
"Ferood, shame bids us take their challenge up,
Yet champion have we none to match this youth.
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
But Rustum came last night; aloof he sits
And sullen, and has pitch'd his tents apart.
Him will I seek, and carry to his ear
The Tartar challenge, and this young man's name.
Haply he will forget his wrath, and fight.
Stand forth the while, and take their challenge up."
So spake he; and Ferood stood forth and cried:—
"Old man, be it agreed as thou hast said!
Let Sohrab arm, and we will find a man."
He spake: and Peran-Wisa turn'd, and strode
Back through the opening squadrons to his tent.
But through the anxious Persians Gudurz ran,
And cross'd the camp which lay behind, and reach'd,
Out on the sands beyond it, Rustum's tents.
Of scarlet cloth they were, and glittering gay,
Just pitch'd; the high pavilion in the midst
Was Rustum's, and his men lay camp'd around.
And Gudurz enter'd Rustum's tent, and found
Rustum; his morning meal was done, but still
The table stood before him, charged with food—
A side of roasted sheep, and cakes of bread,
And dark green melons; and there Rustum sate
Listless, and held a falcon on his wrist,
And play'd with it; but Gudurz came and stood
Before him; and he look'd, and saw him stand,
And with a cry sprang up and dropp'd the bird,

And greeted Gudurz with both hands, and said:—
"Welcome! these eyes could see no better sight.
What news? but sit down first, and eat and drink."
But Gudurz stood in the tent door, and said:—
"Not now! a time will come to eat and drink,
But not to-day; to-day has other needs.
The armies are drawn out, and stand at gaze;
For from the Tartars is a challenge brought
To pick a champion from the Persian lords
To fight their champion—and thou know'st his name—
Sohrab men call him, but his birth is hid.
O Rustum, like thy might is this young man's!
He has the wild stag's foot, the lion's heart;
And he is young, and Iran's chiefs are old,
Or else too weak; and all eyes turn to thee.
Come down and help us, Rustum, or we lose!"
He spoke; but Rustum answer'd with a smile:—
"Go to! if Iran's chiefs are old, then I
Am older; if the young are weak, the King
Errs strangely; for the King, for Kai Khosroo,
Himself is young, and honors younger men,
And lets the aged moulder to their graves.
Rustum he loves no more, but loves the young—
The young may rise at Sohrab's vaunts, not I.
For what care I, though all speak Sohrab's fame?
For would that I myself had such a son,
And not that one slight helpless girl I have—
A son so famed, so brave, to send to war,
And I to tarry with the snow-hair'd Zal,
My father, whom the robber Afghans vex,
And clip his borders short, and drive his herds,
And he has none to guard his weak old age.
There would I go, and hang my armor up,
And with my great name fence that weak old man,
And spend the goodly treasures I have got,

And rest my age, and hear of Sohrab's fame,
And leave to death the hosts of thankless kings,
And with these slaughterous hands draw sword no more."

He spoke and smiled; and Gudurz made reply:—
"What then, O Rustum, will men say to this,
When Sohrab dares our bravest forth, and seeks
Thee most of all, and thou, whom most he seeks,
Hidest thy face? Take heed lest men should say:
Like some old miser, Rustum hoards his fame,
And shuns to peril it with younger men."

And greatly moved, then Rustum made reply:—
"O Gudurz, wherefore dost thou say such words?
Thou knowest better words than this to say.
What is one more, or less, obscure or famed,
Valiant or craven, young or old, to me?
Are not they mortal, am not I myself?
But who for men of nought would do great deeds?
Come, thou shalt see how Rustum hoards his fame!
But I will fight unknown, and in plain arms;
Let not men say of Rustum, he was match'd
In single fight with any mortal man."

He spoke, and frown'd; and Gudurz turn'd, and ran
Back quickly through the camp in fear and joy—
Fear at his wrath, but joy that Rustum came.
But Rustum strode to his tent-door, and call'd
His followers in, and bade them bring his arms,
And clad himself in steel; the arms he chose
Were plain, and on his shield was no device,
Only his helm was rich, inlaid with gold,
And, from the fluted spine atop, a plume
Of horsehair waved, a scarlet horsehair plume.
So arm'd, he issued forth; and Ruksh, his horse,
Follow'd him like a faithful hound at heel—
Ruksh, whose renown was noised through all the earth,
The horse, whom Rustum on a foray once

Did in Bokhara by the river find
A colt beneath its dam, and drove him home,
And rear'd him; a bright bay, with lofty crest,
Dight with a saddle-cloth of broider'd green
Crusted with gold, and on the ground were work'd
All beasts of chase, all beasts which hunters know.
So follow'd, Rustum left his tents, and cross'd
The camp, and to the Persian host appear'd.
And all the Persians knew him, and with shouts
Hail'd; but the Tartars knew not who he was.
And dear as the wet diver to the eyes
Of his pale wife who waits and weeps on shore,
By sandy Bahrein, in the Persian Gulf,
Plunging all day in the blue waves, at night,
Having made up his tale of precious pearls,
Rejoins her in their hut upon the sands—
So dear to the pale Persians Rustum came.

And Rustum to the Persian front advanced,
And Sohrab arm'd in Haman's tent, and came.
And as afield the reapers cut a swath
Down through the middle of a rich man's corn,
And on each side are squares of standing corn,
And in the midst a stubble, short and bare—
So on each side were squares of men, with spears
Bristling, and in the midst, the open sand.
And Rustum came upon the sand, and cast
His eyes toward the Tartar tents, and saw
Sohrab come forth, and eyed him as he came.

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn,
Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge
Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire—
At cock-crow, on a starlit winter's morn,
When the frost flowers the whiten'd window-panes—
And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts
Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustum eyed

The unknown adventurous youth, who from afar
Came seeking Rustum, and defying forth
All the most valiant chiefs; long he perused
His spirited air, and wonder'd who he was.
For very young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;
Like some young cypress, tall, and dark, and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf,
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound—
So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.
And a deep pity enter'd Rustum's soul
As he beheld him coming; and he stood,
And beckon'd to him with his hand, and said:—
"O thou young man, the air of Heaven is soft,
And warm, and pleasant; but the grave is cold!
Heaven's air is better than the cold dead grave.
Behold me! I am vast, and clad in iron,
And tried; and I have stood on many a field
Of blood, and I have fought with many a foe—
Never was that field lost, or that foe saved.
O Sohrab, wherefore wilt thou rush on death?
Be govern'd! quit the Tartar host, and come
To Iran, and be as my son to me,
And fight beneath my banner till I die!
There are no youths in Iran brave as thou."
So he spake, mildly; Sohrab heard his voice,
The mighty voice of Rustum, and he saw
His giant figure planted on the sand,
Sole, like some single tower, which a chief
Hath builded on the waste in former years
Against the robbers; and he saw that head,
Streak'd with its first gray hairs;—hope filled his soul,
And he ran forward and embraced his knees,
And clasp'd his hand within his own, and said:—
"Oh, by thy father's head! by thine own soul!

Art thou not Rustum? speak! art thou not he?"
But Rustum eyed askance the kneeling youth,
And turn'd away, and spake to his own soul:—
"Ah me, I muse what this young fox may mean!
False, wily, boastful, are these Tartar boys.
For if I now confess this thing he asks,
And hide it not, but say: *Rustum is here!*
He will not yield indeed, nor quit our foes,
But he will find some pretext not to fight,
And praise my fame, and proffer courteous gifts,
A belt or sword perhaps, and go his way.
And on a feast-tide, in Afrasiab's hall,
In Samarcand, he will arise and cry:
'I challenged once, when the two armies camp'd
Beside the Oxus, all the Persian lords
To cope with me in single fight; but they
Shrank, only Rustum dared; then he and I
Changed gifts, and went on equal terms away.'
So will he speak, perhaps, while men applaud;
Then were the chiefs of Iran shamed through me."
And then he turn'd, and sternly spake aloud:—
"Rise! wherefore dost thou vainly question thus
Of Rustum? I am here, whom thou hast call'd
By challenge forth; make good thy vaunt, or yield!
Is it with Rustum only thou wouldst fight?
Rash boy, men look on Rustum's face and flee!
For well I know, that did great Rustum stand
Before thy face this way, and were reveal'd,
There would be then no talk of fighting more.
But being what I am, I tell thee this—
Do thou record it in thine inmost soul:
Either thou shalt renounce thy vaunt and yield,
Or else thy bones shall strew this sand, till winds
Bleach them, or Oxus with his summer-floods,
Oxus in summer wash them all away."

He spoke; and Sohrab answer'd, on his feet:—
"Art thou so fierce? Thou wilt not fright me so!
I am no girl, to be made pale by words.
Yet this thou hast said well, did Rustum stand
Here on this field, there were no fighting then.
But Rustum is far hence, and we stand here.
Begin! thou art more vast, more dread than I,
And thou art proved, I know, and I am young—
But yet success sways with the breath of Heaven.
And though thou thinkest that thou knowest sure
Thy victory, yet thou canst not surely know.
For we are all, like swimmers in the sea,
Poised on the top of a huge wave of fate,
Which hangs uncertain to which side to fall.
And whether it will heave us up to land,
Or whether it will roll us out to sea,
Back out to sea, or to the deep waves of death,
We know not, and no search will make us know;
Only the event will teach us in its hour."
He spoke, and Rustum answer'd not, but hurl'd
His spear; down from the shoulder, down it came,
As on some partridge in the corn a hawk,
That long has tower'd in the airy clouds,
Drops like a plummet; Sohrab saw it come,
And sprang aside, quick as a flash; the spear
Hiss'd, and went quivering down into the sand,
Which it sent flying wide; then Sohrab threw
In turn, and full struck Rustum's shield; sharp rang,
The iron plates rang sharp, but turn'd the spear.
And Rustum seized his club, which none but he
Could wield; an unlopp'd trunk it was, and huge,
Still rough—like those which men in treeless plains
To build them boats fish from the flooded rivers,
Hyphasis or Hydaspes, when, high up
By their dark springs, the wind in winter-time

Hath made in Himalayan forest wrack,
And strewn the channels which torn boughs—so huge
The club which Rustum lifted now, and struck
One stroke; but again Sohrab sprang aside,
Lithe as the glancing snake, and the club came
Thundering to earth, and leapt from Rustum's hand.
And Rustum follow'd his own blow, and fell
To his knees, and with his fingers clutch'd the sand;
And now might Sohrab have unsheathed his sword,
And pierced the mighty Rustum while he lay
Dizzy, and on his knees, and choked with sand;
But he look'd on, and smiled, nor bared his sword,
But courteously drew back, and spoke, and said:—
"Thou strik'st too hard! that club of thine will float
Upon the summer-floods, and not my bones.
But rise, and be not wroth! not wroth am I;
No, when I see thee, wrath forsakes my soul.
Thou say'st, thou art not Rustum; be it so!
Who art thou then, that canst so touch my soul?
Boy as I am, I have seen battles too—
Have waded foremost in their bloody waves,
And heard their hollow roar of dying men;
But never was my heart thus touch'd before.
Are they from Heaven, these softenings of the heart?
O thou old warrior, let us yield to Heaven!
Come, plant we here in earth our angry spears,
And make a truce and sit upon this sand,
And pledge each other in red wine, like friends,
And thou shalt talk to me of Rustum's deeds.
There are enough foes in the Persian host,
Whom I may meet, and strike, and feel no pang;
Champions enough Afrasiab has, whom thou
Mayst fight; fight *them*, when they confront thy spear!
But oh, let there be peace 'twixt thee and me!"

He ceased, but while he spake, Rustum had risen,
And stood erect, trembling with rage; his club
He left to lie, but had regain'd his spear,
Whose fiery point now in his mail'd right-hand
Blazed bright and baleful, like that autumn-star,
The baleful sign of fevers; dust had soil'd
His stately crest, and dimm'd his glittering arms.
His breast heaved, his lips foam'd, and twice his voice
Was choked with rage; at last these words broke way:—
"Girl! nimble with thy feet, not with thy hands!
Curl'd minion, dancer, coiner of sweet words!
Fight, let me hear thy hateful voice no more!
Thou art not in Afrasiab's gardens now
With Tartar girls, with whom thou art wont to dance;
But on the Oxus sands, and in the dance
Of battle, and with me, who make no play
Of war; I fight it out, and hand to hand.
Speak not to me of truce, and pledge, and wine!
Remember all thy valor; try thy feints
And cunning! all the pity I had is gone;
Because thou hast shamed me before both the hosts
With thy light skipping tricks, and thy girl's wiles."
He spoke, and Sohrab kindled at his taunts,
And he too drew his sword; at once they rush'd
Together, as two eagles on one prey
Come rushing down together from the clouds,
One from the east, one from the west; their shields
Dash'd with a clang together, and a din
Rose, such as that the sinewy woodcutters
Make often in the forest's heart at morn,
Of hewing axes, crashing trees—such blows
Rustum and Sohrab on each other hail'd.
And you would say that sun and stars took part
In that unnatural conflict; for a cloud
Grew suddenly in Heaven, and dark'd the sun

Over the fighters' heads; and a wind rose
Under their feet, and moaning swept the plain,
And in a sandy whirlwind wrapp'd the pair.
In gloom they twain were wrapp'd, and they alone;
For both the on-looking hosts on either hand
Stood in broad daylight, and the sky was pure,
And the sun sparkled on the Oxus stream.
But in the gloom they fought, with bloodshot eyes
And laboring breath; first Rustum struck the shield
Which Sohrab held stiff out; the steel-spiked spear
Rent the tough plates, but fail'd to reach the skin,
And Rustum pluck'd it back with angry groan.
Then Sohrab with his sword smote Rustum's helm,
Nor clove its steel quite through; but all the crest
He shore away, and that proud horse-hair plume,
Never till now defiled, sank to the dust;
And Rustum bow'd his head; but then the gloom
Grew blacker, thunder rumbled in the air,
And lightnings rent the cloud; and Ruksh, the horse,
Who stood at hand, utter'd a dreadful cry;—
No horse's cry was that, most like the roar
Of some pain'd desert-lion, who all day
Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side,
And comes at night to die upon the sand.
The two hosts heard that cry, and quaked for fear,
And Oxus curdled as it cross'd his stream.
But Sohrab heard, and quail'd not, but rush'd on,
And struck again; and again Rustum bow'd
His head; but this time all the blade, like glass,
Sprang in a thousand shivers on the helm,
And in the hand the hilt remain'd alone.
Then Rustum raised his head; his dreadful eyes
Glared, and he shook on high his menacing spear,
And shouted: *Rustum!*—Sohrab heard that shout,
And shrank amazed; back he recoil'd one step,

And scann'd with blinking eyes the advancing form;
And then he stood bewilder'd; and he dropp'd
His covering shield, and the spear pierced his side.
He reel'd, and staggering back, sank to the ground,
And then the gloom dispersed, and the wind fell,
And the bright sun broke forth, and melted all
The cloud; and the two armies saw the pair—
Saw Rustum standing, safe upon his feet,
And Sohrab, wounded, on the bloody sand.

Then, with a bitter smile, Rustum began:—
"Sohrab, thou thoughtest in thy mind to kill
A Persian lord this day, and strip his corpse,
And bear thy trophies to Afrasiab's tent.
Or else that the great Rustum would come down
Himself to fight, and that thy wiles would move
His heart to take a gift, and let thee go.
And then that all the Tartar host would praise
Thy courage or thy craft, and spread thy fame,
To glad thy father in his weak old age.
Fool, thou art slain, and by an unknown man!
Dearer to the red jackals shalt thou be
Than to thy friends, and to thy father old."

And, with a fearless mien, Sohrab replied:—
"Unknown thou art; yet thy fierce vaunt is vain.
Thou dost not slay me, proud and boastful man!
No! Rustum slays me, and this filial heart.
For were I match'd with ten such men as thee,
And I were that which till to-day I was,
They should be lying here, I standing there.
But that belovéd name unnerved my arm—
That name, and something, I confess, in thee,
Which troubles all my heart, and made my shield
Fall; and thy spear transfix'd an unarm'd foe.
And now thou boastest, and insult'st my fate.
But hear thou this, fierce man, tremble to hear

The mighty Rustum shall avenge my death!
My father, whom I seek through all the world,
He shall avenge my death, and punish thee!"
As when some hunter in the spring hath found
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,
Upon the craggy isle of a hill-lake,
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose,
And follow'd her to find her where she fell
Far off;—anon her mate comes winging back
From hunting, and a great way off descries
His huddling young left sole; at that, he checks
His pinion, and with short uneasy sweeps
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams
Chiding his mate back to her nest; but she
Lies dying, with the arrow in her side,
In some far stony gorge out of his ken,
A heap of fluttering feathers—never more
Shall the lake glass her, flying over it;
Never the black and dripping precipices
Echo her stormy scream as she sails by—
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,
So Rustum knew not his own loss, but stood
Over his dying son, and knew him not.
But, with a cold incredulous voice, he said:—
"What prate is this of fathers and revenge?
The mighty Rustum never had a son."
And, with a failing voice, Sohrab replied:—
"Ah yes, he had! and that lost son am I.
Surely the news will one day reach his ear,
Reach Rustum, where he sits, and tarries long,
Somewhere, I know not where, but far from here
And pierce him like a stab, and make him leap
To arms, and cry for vengeance upon thee.
Fierce man, bethink thee, for an only son!
What will that grief, what will that vengeance be?

Oh, could I live, till I that grief had seen!
Yet him I pity not so much, but her,
My mother, who in Ader-baijan dwells
With that old king, her father, who grows gray
With age, and rules over the valiant Koords.
Her most I pity, who no more will see
Sohrab returning from the Tartar camp,
With spoils and honor, when the war is done.
But a dark rumor will be bruited up,
From tribe to tribe, until it reach her ear;
And then will that defenceless woman learn
That Sohrab will rejoice her sight no more,
But that in battle with a nameless foe,
By the far-distant Oxus, he is slain."

He spoke; and as he ceased, he wept aloud,
Thinking of her he left, and his own death.
He spoke; but Rustum listen'd, plunged in thought.
Nor did he yet believe it was his son
Who spoke, although he call'd back names he knew;
For he had had sure tidings that the babe,
Which was in Ader-baijan born to him,
Had been a puny girl, no boy at all—
So that sad mother sent him word, for fear
Rustum should seek the boy, to train in arms
And so he deem'd that either Sohrab took,
By a false boast, the style of Rustum's son;
Or that men gave it to him, to swell his fame.
So deem'd he; yet he listen'd, plunged in thought
And his soul set to grief, as the vast tide
Of the bright rocking Ocean sets to shore
At the full moon; tears gather'd in his eyes;
For he remember'd his own early youth,
And all its bounding rapture; as, at dawn,
The shepherd from his mountain-lodge descries
A far, bright city, smitten by the sun,

Through many rolling clouds—so Rustum saw
His youth; saw Sohrab's mother, in her bloom;
And that old king her father, who loved well
His wandering guest, and gave him his fair child
With joy; and all the pleasant life they led,
They three, in that long-distant summertime—
The castle, and the dewy woods, and hunt
And hound, and morn on those delightful hills
In Ader-baijan. And he saw that Youth,
Of age and looks to be his own dear son,
Piteous and lovely, lying on the sand,
Like some rich hyacinth which by the scythe
Of an unskilful gardener has been cut,
Mowing the garden grass-plots near its bed,
And lies, a fragrant tower of purple bloom,
On the mown, dying grass—so Sohrab lay,
Lovely in death, upon the common sand.
And Rustum gazed on him with grief, and said:—

"O Sohrab, thou indeed art such a son
Whom Rustum, wert thou his, might well have loved.
Yet here thou errest, Sohrab, or else men
Have told thee false—thou art not Rustum's son.
For Rustum had no son; one child he had—
But one—a girl; who with her mother now
Plies some light female task, nor dreams of us—
Of us she dreams not, nor of wounds, nor war."

But Sohrab answer'd him in wrath; for now
The anguish of the deep-fixed spear grew fierce,
And he desired to draw forth the steel,
And let the blood flow free, and so to die—
But first he would convince his stubborn foe;
And, rising sternly on one arm, he said:—

"Man, who art thou who dost deny my words?
Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.

I tell thee, prick'd upon this arm I bear
That seal which Rustum to my mother gave,
That she might prick it on the babe she bore."
He spoke; and all the blood left Rustum's cheeks,
And his knees totter'd, and he smote his hand
Against his breast, his heavy mailed hand,
That the hard iron corslet clank'd aloud;
And to his heart he press'd the other hand,
And in a hollow voice he spake, and said:—
"Sohrab, that were a proof which could not lie!
If thou show this, then art thou Rustum's son."
Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,
And show'd a sign in faint vermilion points
Prick'd; as a cunning workman, in Pekin,
Pricks with vermilion some clear porcelain vase,
An emperor's gift—at early morn he paints,
And all day long, and, when night comes, the lamp
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands—
So delicately prick'd the sign appear'd
On Sohrab's arm, the sign of Rustum's seal.
It was that griffin, which of old rear'd Zal,
Rustum's great father, whom they left to die,
A helpless babe, among the mountain-rocks;
Him that kind creature found, and rear'd, and loved—
Then Rustum took it for his glorious sign.
And Sohrab bared that image on his arm,
And himself scann'd it long with mournful eyes,
And then he touch'd it with his hand and said:—
"How say'st thou? Is that sign the proper sign
Of Rustum's son, or of some other man's?"
He spoke; but Rustum gazed, and gazed, and stood
Speechless; and then he utter'd one sharp cry:
O boy—thy father!—and his voice choked there.
And then a dark cloud pass'd before his eyes,

And his head swam, and he sank down to earth.
But Sohrab crawl'd to where he lay, and cast
His arms about his neck, and kiss'd his lips,
And with fond faltering fingers stroked his cheeks,
Trying to call him back to life; and life
Came back to Rustum, and he oped his eyes,
And they stood wide with horror; and he seized
In both his hands the dust which lay around,
And threw it on his head, and smirch'd his hair,—
His hair, and face, and beard, and glittering arms;
And strong convulsive groanings shook his breast,
And his sobs choked him; and he clutch'd his sword.
To draw it, and for ever let life out.
But Sohrab saw his thought, and held his hands,
And with a soothing voice he spake, and said:—
"Father, forbear! for I but meet to-day
The doom which at my birth was written down
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,
I know it! but fate trod those promptings down
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged
The strife, and hurl'd me on my father's spear.
But let us speak no more of this! I find
My father; let me feel that I have found!
Come, sit beside me on this sand, and take
My head betwixt thy hands, and kiss my cheeks,
And wash them with thy tears, and say: *My son!*
Quick! quick! for number'd are my sands of life,
And swift; for like the lightning to this field
I came, and like the wind I go away—
Sudden, and swift, and like a passing wind.
But it was writ in Heaven that this should be."
So said he, and his voice released the heart
Of Rustum, and his tears broke forth; he cast

His arms round his son's neck, and wept aloud,
And kiss'd him. And awe fell on both the hosts,
When they saw Rustum's grief; and Ruksh, the horse,
With his head bowing to the ground and mane
Sweeping the dust, came near, and in mute woe
First to the one, then to the other moved
His head, as if inquiring what their grief
Might mean; and from his dark, compassionate eyes,
The big warm tears roll'd down, and caked the sand.
But Rustum chid him with stern voice, and said:—
"Ruksh, now thou grievest; but, O Ruksh; thy feet
Should first have rotted on their nimble joints,
Or ere they brought thy master to this field!"
But Sohrab look'd upon the horse and said;—
"Is this, then, Ruksh? How often, in past days,
My mother told me of thee, thou brave steed,
My terrible father's terrible horse! and said,
That I should one day find thy lord and thee.
Come, let me lay my hand upon thy mane!
O Ruksh, thou art more fortunate than I;
For thou hast gone where I shall never go,
And snuff'd the breezes of my father's home,
And thou hast trod the sands of Seistan,
And seen the River of Helmund, and the Lake
Of Zirrah; and the aged Zal himself
Has often stroked thy neck, and given thee food,
Corn in a golden platter soak'd with wine,
And said; *O Ruksh! bear Rustum well!*—but I
Have never known my grandsire's furrow'd face,
Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan,
Nor slaked my thirst at the clear Helmund stream;
But lodged among my father's foes, and seen
Afrasiab's cities only, Samarcand,
Bokhara, and lone Khiva in the waste,
And the black Toorkmun tents; and only drunk

The desert rivers, Moorghab and Tejend,
Kohik, and where the Kalmuks feed their sheep,
The northern Sir; and this great Oxus stream,
The yellow Oxus, by whose brink I die."

Then, with a heavy groan, Rustum bewail'd:—
"Oh, that its waves were flowing over me!
Oh, that I saw its grains of yellow silt
Roll tumbling in the current o'er my head!"

But, with a grave mild voice, Sohrab replied:—
"Desire not that, my father! thou must live.
For some are born to do great deeds, and live,
As some are born to be obscured, and die.
Do thou the deeds I die too young to do,
And reap a second glory in thine age;
Thou art my father, and thy gain is mine.
But come! thou seest this great host of men
Which follow me; I pray thee, slay not these!
Let me entreat for them; what have they done?
They follow'd me, my hope, my fame, my star.
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace.
But me thou must bear hence, not send with them,
But carry me with thee to Seistan,
And place me on a bed, and mourn for me,
Thou, and the snow-hair'd Zal, and all thy friends.
And thou must lay me in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above my bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all.
That so the passing horseman on the waste
May see my tomb a great way off, and cry:
Sohrab, the mighty Rustum's son, lies there,
Whom his great father did in ignorance kill!
And I be not forgotten in my grave."

And, with a mournful voice, Rustum replied:—
"Fear not, as thou hast said, Sohrab, my son,
So shall it be; for I will burn my tents,

And quit the host, and bear thee hence with me,
And carry thee away to Seistan,
And place thee on a bed, and mourn for thee,
With the snow-headed Zal, and all my friends,
And I will lay thee in that lovely earth,
And heap a stately mound above thy bones,
And plant a far-seen pillar over all,
And men shall not forget thee in thy grave,
And I will spare thy host; yea, let them go!
Let them all cross the Oxus back in peace!
What should I do with slaying any more?
For would that all that I have ever slain
Might be once more alive; my bitterest foes,
And they who were call'd champions in their time,
And through whose death I won that fame I have—
And I were nothing but a common man,
A poor, mean soldier, and without renown,
So thou mightest live too, my son, my son!
Or rather would that I, even I myself,
Might now be lying on this bloody sand,
Near death, and by an ignorant stroke of thine,
Not thou of mine! and I might die, not thou;
And I, not thou, be borne to Seistan;
And Zal might weep above my grave, not thine;
And say: *O son I weep thee not too sore,*
For willingly, I know, thou met'st thine end!
But now in blood and battles was my youth,
And full of blood and battles is my age,
And I shall never end this life of blood."

Then, at the point of death, Sohrab replied:—
"A life of blood indeed, thou dreadful man!
But thou shalt yet have peace; only not now,
Not yet! but thou shalt have it on that day,
When thou shalt sail in a high-masted ship,
Thou and the other peers of Kai Khosroo,

Returning home over the salt blue sea,
From laying thy dear master in his grave."
And Rustum gazed in Sohrab's face, and said:—
"Soon be that day, my son, and deep that sea!
Till then, if fate so wills, let me endure."
He spoke; and Sohrab smiled on him, and took
The spear, and drew it from his side, and eased
His wound's imperious anguish; but the blood
Came welling from the open gash, and life
Flow'd with the stream;—all down his cold white side
The crimson torrent ran, dim now and soil'd,
Like the soil'd tissue of white violets
Left, freshly gather'd, on the native bank,
By children whom their nurses call with haste
Indoors from the sun's eye; his head droop'd low,
His limps grew slack; motionless, white, he lay—
White, with eyes closed; only when heavy gasps,
Deep heavy gasps quivering through all his frame,
Convulsed him back to life, he open'd them,
And fix'd them feebly on his father's face;
Till now all strength was ebb'd, and from his limbs,
Unwillingly the spirit fled away,
Regretting the warm mansion which it left,
And youth, and bloom, and this delightful world.
So, on the bloody sand, Sohrab lay dead;
And the great Rustum drew his horseman's cloak
Down o'er his face, and sate by his dead son.
As those black granite pillars, once high-rear'd
By Jemshid in Persepolis, to bear
His house, now 'mid their broken flights of steps
Lie prone, enormous, down the mountain side—
So in the sand lay Rustum by his son.
And night came down over the solemn waste,
And the two gazing hosts, and that sole pair,
And darken'd all; and a cold fog, with night,

Crept from the Oxus. Soon a hum arose,
As of a great assembly loosed, and fires
Began to twinkle through the fog; for now
Both armies moved to camp, and took their meal;
The Persians took it on the open sands
Southward, the Tartars by the river marge;
And Rustum and his son were left alone.
But the majestic river floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
Right for the polar star, past Orgunjè,
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands began
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,
A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea.

THE SCHOLAR-GIPSY

Go, FOR they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes!
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped grasses shoot another head;
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,

And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd, and again renew the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
Then here at noon comes back his stores to use,—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn,—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book.
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of that Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer-morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,

And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life inquired;
Whereat he answered, that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and return'd no more,
But rumours hung about the country side
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore,
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst in spring:
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle bench, the smock-frock'd boors
Had found him seated at their entering.

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly:
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, Wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks
I ask if thou hast pass'd their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moor'd to the cool bank in the summer heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
  Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablock-hithe,
  Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
    As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
  And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
  Pluck'd in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
  To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
  Or cross a stile into the public way.
    Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leaf'd, white anemone,
  Dark bluebells drench'd with dews of summer eves,
  And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when haytime's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
  Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-wing'd swallows haunt the glittering
      Thames,
  To bathe in the abandon'd lasher pass,
    Have often pass'd thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
  Mark'd thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
  Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
  Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
  Children, who early range these slopes and late
    For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April-day,
  The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
  And mark'd thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley wood—
Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
  Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagg'd and shreds of gray,
  Above the forest-ground called Thessaly—
    The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
  So often has he known thee past him stray,
  Rapt, twirling in thy hand a wither'd spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
  Have I not pass'd thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
  Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
    And thou hast climb'd the hill,
And gain'd the white brow of the Cumner range;
  Turn'd once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
  The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall—
Then sought thy straw in some sequester'd grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundreds years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,

And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wander'd from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark, red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since number'd with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,

Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day—
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,
Who most has suffer'd takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipp'd patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair—
But none has hope like thine!

Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before the strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silver'd branches of the glade—
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfix'd thy powers,

And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-hair'd creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan Isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,
Green, bursting figs, and tunnies steep'd in brine—
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves—
And snatch'd his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the Blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While, hark! far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapors white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing—then blotting from our sight!—
Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrerie appear.

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way.
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight gray
What pointed roofs are these advance?—
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play—
The humid corridors behold!
Where, ghostlike in the deepening night
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer—
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then, with bare
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes, and then his visage wan
Is buried in his cowl once more.
The cells!—the suffering Son of Man
Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome
Not to feed priestly pride are there,
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!
They paint of souls the inner strife,
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown—yet mild,
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!
Strong children of the Alpine wild
Whose culture is the brethren's care;
Of human tasks their only one,
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,
From England, Germany, or Spain—
All are before me! I behold
The House, the Brotherhood austere!
—And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom;
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!
At whose behest I long ago
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd—
I come not here to be your foe!
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!
But as, on some far northern strand,
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek
In pity and mournful awe might stand
Before some fallen Runic stone—
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round
Till I possess my soul again;
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control!

For the world cries your faith is now
But a dead time's exploded dream;
My melancholy, sciolists say,
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme—
As if the world had ever had
A faith, or sciolists been sad!

Ah, if it *be* pass'd, take away,
At least, the restlessness, the pain;
Be man henceforth no more a prey
To these out-dated stings again!
The nobleness of grief is gone—
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But—if you cannot give us ease—
Last of the race of them who grieve
Here leave us to die out with these
Last of the people who believe!
Silent, while years engrave the brow;
Silent—the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent,
The kings of modern thought are dumb;
Silent they are, though not content,
And wait to see the future come.
They have the grief men had of yore,
But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers water'd with their tears
This sea of time whereon we sail,
Their voices were in all men's ears
We pass'd within their puissant hail.
Still the same ocean round us raves,
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?—
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
Say, is life lighter now than then;
The sufferers died, they left their pain—
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away,
Musical through Italian trees
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!—
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifler breaks your spell;
But we—we learned your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardiness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity.
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race;
You give the universe your law,
You triumph over time and space!
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall,
Forgotten in a forest-glade,
And secret from the eyes of all.
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream,
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the wood, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise.
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?—
"Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry
And call us?—but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow,
Whose bent was taken long ago.

"Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine,
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?
—Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
And leave our desert to its peace!"

THYRSIS

A Monody, *to commemorate the author's friend,* Arthur Hugh Clough, *who died at Florence,* 1861.

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village-street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks;
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days;
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Up past the wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air; leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briars;
And that sweet City with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim;
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour,
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright

Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Scholar-Gipsy, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;
And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's-holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lower'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead!

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,

Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snap-dragon,
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see!
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee.

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate,
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine, among whose crownèd hair
Are flowers, first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd!
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain.

Well! wind-dispers'd and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedg'd brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried,
High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time.
Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who, by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoor'd our skiff, when, through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
And darting swallows, and light water-gnats,
We track'd the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heav'd the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well.

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with gray;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the unpractis'd eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall.
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet;—Look! adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come—
Quick let me fly, and cross
Into yon further field!—'Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the Signal-Tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno vale
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our Tree is there!
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him.
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,)
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see!
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal strains of old!
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes,
And how a call celestial round him rang
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields; yet will I not despair;
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the soft canopy of English air
That lonely Tree against the western sky
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wert bound,
Thou wanderest with me for a little hour;

Men gave thee nothing, but this happy quest,
If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime;
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone,
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note,
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It fail'd, and thou wast mute;
Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thrysis, in reach of sheep-bells is my home!
Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:

Why faintest thou? I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! the light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our Tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

SAINT BRANDAN

Saint Brandan sails the northern main;
The brotherhoods of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again;
So late! such storms! The saint is mad!

He heard, across the howling seas,
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
Twinkle the monastery-lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steered;
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar lights are neared,
The sea without a human shore.

At last (it was the Christmas-night;
Stars shone after a day of storm)
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it—Christ!—a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell,
It is—oh, where shall Brandan fly?—
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly, "Wait!
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;

My name is under all men's ban:
Ah! tell them of my respite too.

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame),—

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say,—
Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!

" 'Ah! whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
The leper recollect, said he,
Who asked the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.

"Then I remembered how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust with burning heat;

"And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fevered him fivefold.

"He gazed upon me as I passed,
And murmured, *Help me, or I die!*
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast,
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

"O Brandan! think what grace divine,
What blessings must full goodness shower,

When fragment of it small, like mine,
Hath such inestimable power!

"Well-fed, well-clothed, well-friended, I
Did that chance act of good, that one!
Then went my way to kill and lie,
Forgot my good as soon as done.

"That germ of kindness, in the womb
Of mercy caught, did not expire;
Outlives my guilt, outlives my doom,
And friends me in the pit of fire.

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the sinner's lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

"I staunch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest,
That Joppan leper's ease was pain."

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bowed his head, he breathed a prayer,
Then looked—and lo, the frosty skies!
The iceberg, and no Judas there!

YOUTH'S AGITATIONS

When I shall be divorced, some ten years hence,
From this poor present self which I am now;
When youth has done its tedious vain expense
Of passions that forever ebb and flow;

Shall I not joy youth's heats are left behind,
And breathe more happy in an even clime?
Ah, no! for then I shall begin to find
A thousand virtues in this hated time!

Then I shall wish its agitations back,
And all its thwarting currents of desire;
Then I shall praise the heat which then I lack,
And call this hurrying fever, generous fire;

And sigh that one thing only has been lent
To youth and age in common,—discontent.

AUSTERITY OF POETRY

That son of Italy who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sate with his bride to see a public show.
Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,
'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.
Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorn'd outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and austerity within.

WORLDLY PLACE

Even *in a palace, life may be led well!*
So spake the imperial sage, purest of men,
Marcus Aurelius. But the stifling den

Of common life, where, crowded up pell-mell.
Our freedom for a little bread we sell,
And drudge under some foolish master's ken
Who rates us as if we peer outside our pen—
Match'd with a palace, is not this a hell?
Even in a palace! On his truth sincere,
Who spoke these words, no shadow ever came;
And when my ill-school'd spirit is aflame
Some nobler, ampler stage of life to win,
I'll stop, and say: "There were no succor here!
The aids to noble life are all within."

EAST LONDON

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,
And the pale weaver, through his windows seen
In Spitalfields, look'd thrice dispirited.
I met a preacher there I knew, and said:
"Ill and o'erwork'd, how fare you in this scene?"—
"Bravely!" said he; "for I of late have been
Much cheer'd with thoughts of Christ, *the living bread.*"
O human soul! as long as thou canst so
Set up a mark of everlasting light,
Above the howling senses' ebb and flow,
To cheer thee, and to right thee if thou roam—
Not with lost toil thou laborest through the night!
Thou mak'st the heaven thou hop'st indeed thy home.

WEST LONDON

Crouch'd on the pavement, close by Belgrave Square,
A tramp I saw, ill, moody, and tongue-tied.
A babe was in her arms, and at her side
A girl; their clothes were rags, their feet were bare.

Some laboring men, whose work lay somewhere there,
Pass'd opposite; she touch'd her girl, who hied
Across, and begg'd, and came back satisfied.
The rich she had let pass with frozen stare.
Thought I: "Above her state this spirit towers;
She will not ask of aliens, but of friends,
Of sharers in a common human fate.
She turns from that cold succor, which attends
The unknown little from the unknowing great,
And points us to a better time than ours."

EAST AND WEST

In the bare midst of Anglesey they show
Two springs which close by one another play;
And, "Thirteen hundred years agone," they say,
"Two saints met often where those waters flow.
One came from Penmon westward, and a glow
Whiten'd his face from the sun's fronting ray;
Eastward the other, from the dying day,
And he with unsunn'd face did always go."
Seiriol the Bright, Kybi the Dark! men said.
The seër from the East was then in light,
The seër from the West was then in shade.
Ah! now 'tis changed. In conquering sunshine bright
The man of the bold West now comes array'd;
He of the mystic East is touch'd with night.

THE BETTER PART

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
"Christ," some one says, "was human as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;
We live no more, when we have done our span."

"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care?
From sin, which Heaven records not, why forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!"
So answerest thou; but why not rather say:
"Hath man no second life?—*Pitch this one high!*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see?—
More strictly, then, the inward judge obey!
Was Christ a man like us? *Ah! let us try*
If we then, too, can be such men as he!"

THE DIVINITY

"Yes, write it in the rock," Saint Bernard said,
"Grave it on brass with adamantine pen!
'Tis God himself becomes apparent, when
God's wisdom and God's goodness are displayed;

For God of these his attributes is made."—
Well spake the impetuous saint, and bore of men
The suffrage captive; now not one in ten
Recalls the obscure opposer he outweighed.

God's wisdom and God's goodness! Ay, but fools
Mis-define these till God knows them no more.
Wisdom and goodness, they are God!—what schools

Have yet so much as heard this simpler lore?
This no saint preaches, and this no Church rules;
'Tis in the desert, now and heretofore.

IMMORTALITY

Foiled by our fellow-men, depressed, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life,* we say,
The world shall be thrust down, and we upborne.

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they
Who failed under the heat of this life's day
Support the fervors of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing,—only he.
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

DOVER BEACH

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

GROWING OLD

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The lustre of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
—Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not
Ah, 't is not what in youth we dream'd 't would be!
'T is not to have our life
Mellow'd and soften'd as with sunset-glow,
A golden day's decline.

'T is not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirr'd;
And weep, and feel the fulness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

THE PROGRESS OF POESY

A VARIATION

Youth rambles on life's arid mount,
And strikes the rock, and finds the vein,
And brings the water from the fount,—
The fount which shall not flow again.

The man mature with labor chops
For the bright stream a channel grand,
And sees not that the sacred drops
Ran off and vanished out of hand.

And then the old man totters nigh,
And feebly rakes among the stones.
The mount is mute, the channel dry;
And down he lays his weary bones.

PIS ALLER

"Man is blind because of sin;
Revelation makes him sure:
Without that, who looks within
Looks in vain, for all's obscure."

Nay, look closer into man!
Tell me, can you find indeed
Nothing sure, no moral plan
Clear prescribed, without your creed?

"No, I nothing can perceive!
Without that, all's dark for men.
That, or nothing, I believe."—
For God's sake, believe it, then!

THE LAST WORD

Creep into thy narrow bed,—
Creep, and let no more be said.
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou art tired: best be still.

They out-talked thee, hissed thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot, and passed,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!

A CAUTION TO POETS

What poets feel not, when they make,
A pleasure in creating,
The world, in *its* turn, will not take
Pleasure in contemplating.

RUGBY CHAPEL

November 1857

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field

Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of wither'd leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows;—but cold
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father! art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigor, again;
In the gloom of November we pass'd
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impair'd not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand
In the autumn evening and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,

Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, dost rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succorest!—this was thy work;
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?—
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—

Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swell'd,
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance!—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sung
Gorges, o'er mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightning dazzles our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breach'd
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin; alas,

Havoc is made in our train!
Friends who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compress'd, we strain on,
On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripp'd, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.

If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
A faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.
And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honor'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—

Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshall'd them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain.
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardor divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness is not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!

Order, courage, return;
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

COVENTRY PATMORE

COVENTRY PATMORE

1825 Born at Woodford, in Essex. Father was a man of liberal religious tendencies, of comfortable means, and a lover of poetry. Under his direction, Patmore was largely self-educated.

1839 Went to Paris and began to write verse; published his first volume of poems in 1844.

1846–65 Was an assistant in the Library of the British Museum.

1847 Married Emily Andrews, an exceptionally able and attractive woman. She died in 1862.

1853–63 These years saw the appearance of *Tamerton Church-Tower*, *The Betrothal*, *The Espousals*, *Faithful for Ever*, and *The Victories of Love*—all parts of *The Angel in the House*.

1864 Joined the Catholic Church.

1865 Married Mary Byles; family settled at Heron's Ghyll, in Sussex, where he lived until 1875.

1868 Published *Odes*, which were enlarged and printed as *The Unknown Eros* in 1877.

1896 Died at Lymington.

From THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

LOVE'S REALITY

I WALK, I trust, with open eyes;
  I've travell'd half my worldly course;
And in the way behind me lies
  Much vanity and some remorse;
I've lived to feel how pride may part
  Spirits, tho' match'd like hand and glove;
I've blushed for love's abode, the heart;
  But have not disbelieved in love;
Nor unto love, sole mortal thing
  Or worth immortal, done the wrong
To count it, with the rest that sing,
  Unworthy of a serious song;
And love is my reward: for now,
  When most of dead'ning time complain,
The myrtle blooms upon my brow,
  Its odour quickens all my brain.

THE LOVER

HE MEETS, by heavenly chance express,
  The destined maid; some hidden hand
Unveils to him that loveliness
  Which others cannot understand.
His merits in her presence grow,
  To match the promise in her eyes,
And round her happy footsteps blow
  The authentic airs of Paradise.
For joy of her he cannot sleep;

Her beauty haunts him all the night;
It melts his heart, it makes him weep
For wonder, worship, and delight.
O, paradox of love, he longs,
Most humble when he most aspires,
To suffer scorn and cruel wrongs
From her he honours and desires.
Her graces make him rich, and ask
No guerdon; this imperial style
Affronts him; he disdains to bask,
The pensioner of her priceless smile.
He prays for some hard thing to do,
Some work of fame and labour immense,
To stretch the languid bulk and thew
Of love's fresh-born magnipotence.
No smallest boon were bought too dear,
Though barter'd for his love-sick life;
Yet trusts he, with undoubted cheer,
To vanquish heaven, and call her Wife.
He notes how queens of sweetness still
Neglect their crowns, and stoop to mate;
How, self-consign'd with lavish will,
They ask but love proportionate;
How swift pursuit by small degrees,
Love's tactic, works like miracle;
How valour, clothed in courtesies,
Brings down the haughtiest citadel;
And therefore, though he merits not
To kiss the braid upon her skirt,
His hope, discouraged ne'er a jot,
Out-soars all possible desert.

UNTHRIFT

Ah, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapen'd paradise;
How given for nought her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.

THE TRIBUTE

Boon Nature to the woman bows;
She walks in earth's whole glory clad,
And, chiefest far herself of shows.
All others help her, and are glad;
No splendour 'neath the sky's proud dome
But serves for her familiar wear;
The far-fetch'd diamond finds its home
Flashing and smouldering in her hair;
For her the seas their pearls reveal;
Art and strange lands her pomp supply
With purple, chrome, and cochineal,
Ochre, and lapis lazuli;
The worm its golden woof presents;
Whatever runs, flies, dives, or delves,
All doff for her their ornaments,
Which suit her better than themselves;
And all, by this their power to give,
Proving her right to take, proclaim
Her beauty's clear prerogative
To profit so by Eden's blame.

COMPENSATION

That nothing here may want its praise,
Know, she who in her dress reveals
A fine and modest taste, displays
More loveliness than she conceals.

THE HEART'S PROPHECIES

Be not amazed at life; 'tis still
The mode of God with His elect
Their hopes exactly to fulfil,
In times and ways they least expect.

LOVE'S PERVERSITY

How strange a thing a lover seems
To animals that do not love!
Lo, where he walks and talks in dreams,
And flouts us with his Lady's glove;
How foreign is the garb he wears;
And how his great devotion mocks
Our poor propriety, and scares
The undevout with paradox?
His soul, through scorn of worldly care,
And great extremes of sweet and gall,
And musing much on all that's fair,
Grows witty and fantastical;
He sobs his joy and sings his grief,
And evermore finds such delight
In simply picturing his relief,
That 'plaining seems to cure his plight;
He makes his sorrow, when there's none;
His fancy blows both cold and hot;

Next to the wish that she'll be won,
His first hope is that she may not;
He sues, yet deprecates consent;
Would she be captured she must fly;
She looks too happy and content,
For whose least pleasure he would die.
Oh, cruelty, she cannot care
For one to whom she's always kind!
He says he's nought, but, oh, despair,
If he's not Jove to her fond mind!
He's jealous if she pets a dove,
She must be his with all her soul;
Yet 'tis a postulate of love
That part is greater than the whole;
And all his apprehension's stress,
When he's with her, regards her hair,
Her hand, a ribbon of her dress,
As if his life were only there;
Because she's constant, he will change,
And kindest glances coldly meet,
And, all the time he seems so strange,
His soul is fawning at her feet;
Of smiles and simple heaven grown tired,
He wickedly provokes her tears,
And when she weeps, as he desired,
Falls slain with ecstasies of fears;
He blames her, though she has no fault,
Except the folly to be his;
He worships her, the more to exalt
The profanation of a kiss;
Health's his disease; he's never well
But when his paleness shames her rose;
His faith's a rock-built citadel,
Its sign a flag that each way blows;

His o'erfed fancy frets and fumes;
And Love, in him, is fierce, like Hate,
And ruffles in his ambrosial plumes
Against the bars of time and fate.

THE FOREIGN LAND

A WOMAN is a foreign land,
Of which, though there he settle young
A man will ne'er quite understand
The customs, politics, and tongue.
The foolish hie them post-haste through
See fashions odd, and prospects fair,
Learn of the language, 'How d'ye do,'
And go and brag they have been there.
The most for leave to trade apply,
For once, at Empire's seat, her heart,
Then get what knowledge ear and eye
Glean chancewise in the life-long mart.
And certain others, few and fit,
Attach them to the Court, and see
The Country's best, its accent hit,
And partly sound its polity.

From THE UNKNOWN EROS

DEPARTURE

IT WAS not like your great and gracious ways!
Do you, that have nought other to lament,
Never, my Love, repent
Of how, that July afternoon,
You went,
With sudden, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,

Upon your journey of so many days,
Without a single kiss or a good-bye?
I knew, indeed, that you were parting soon;
And so we sate, within the low sun's rays,
You whispering to me, for your voice was weak,
Your harrowing praise.
Well, it was well, my Wife,
To hear you such things speak,
And see your love,
Make of your eyes a growing gloom of life,
As a warm South-wind sombres a March grove.
And it was like your great and gracious ways
To turn your talk on daily things, my Dear,
Lifting the luminous, pathetic lash
To let the laughter flash,
Whilst I drew near,
Because you spoke so low that I could scarcely hear.
But all at once to leave me at the last,
More at the wonder than the loss aghast,
With huddled, unintelligible phrase,
And frighten'd eye,
And go your journey of all days
With not one kiss or a good-bye,
And the only loveless look the look with which you pass'd,
'Twas all unlike your great and gracious ways.

THE AZALEA

THERE, where the sun shines first
Against our room,
She train'd the gold Azalea, whose perfume
She, Spring-like, from her breathing grace dispersed.
Last night the delicate crests of saffron bloom,
For that their dainty likeness watch'd and nurst,

Were just at point to burst.
At dawn I dream'd, O God, that she was dead,
And groan'd aloud upon my wretched bed,
And waked, ah, God, and did not waken her,
But lay, with eyes still closed,
Perfectly bless'd in the delicious sphere
By which I knew so well that she was near,
My heart to speechless thankfulness composed.
Till 'gan to stir
A dizzy somewhat in my troubled head—
It *was* the azalea's breath, and she *was* dead!
The warm night had the lingering buds disclosed;
And I had fall'n asleep with to my breast
A chance-found letter press'd
In which she said,
"So, till to-morrow eve, my Own, adieu!
"Parting's well-paid with soon again to meet,
"Soon in your arms to feel so small and sweet,
"Sweet to myself that am so sweet to you!"

REGINA COELI

Say, did his sisters wonder what could Joseph see
In a mild, silent little Maid like thee?
And was it awful in that narrow house,
With God for Babe and Spouse?
Nay, like thy simple, female sort, each one
Apt to find Him in Husband and in Son,
Nothing to thee came strange in this.
Thy wonder was but wondrous bliss:
Wondrous, for, though
True Virgin lives not but does know,
(Howbeit none ever yet confess'd,)
That God lies really in her breast,
Of thine He made His special nest!

And so
All mothers worship little feet,
And kiss the very ground they've trod;
But, ah, thy little Baby sweet
Who was indeed thy God!

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

1828 Born in London, the son of an Italian poet-patriot who had fled to London as a political exile.

1835 Matriculated at King's College School for the study of art.

1848 With Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, and Thomas Woolner organized the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The Brotherhood exerted a profound influence upon both art and literature.

1849 Exhibited his first picture: *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin.*

1850 Contributed *The Blessed Damozel* to *The Germ,* the literary organ of the Brotherhood.

1856 Became contributor to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.*

1860 Married Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal whom he had loved since 1850; two years later she died. In a frenzy of grief he committed the manuscript of some new poems to her casket. These were recovered, with his permission, by his friends in 1869.

1861 Published *Early Italian Poets,* a volume of translations. This volume was revised and printed in 1874 under the title *Dante and His Circle.*

1870 Published *Poems;* a new edition of these appeared in 1881.

1881 Published *Ballads and Sonnets.*

1882 Died.

MY SISTER'S SLEEP

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve:
  At length the long-ungranted shade
  Of weary eyelids overweigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
  Over the bed from chime to chime,
  Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
  With work to finish. For the glare
  Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
  Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
  The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
  Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
  And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
  And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
  Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say;
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stooped an instant, calm, and turned;
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word:
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
"Christ's blessing on the newly born!"

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,

Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce

Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be harkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in Heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,

Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;

Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now.
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased,
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:

And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

THE CARD-DEALER

Could you not drink her gaze like wine?
Yet though its splendor swoon
Into the silence languidly
As a tune into a tune,
Those eyes unravel the coiled night
And know the stars at noon.

The gold that's heaped beside her hand,
In truth rich prize it were;
And rich the dreams that wreathe her brows
With magic stillness there;
And he were rich who should unwind
That woven golden hair.

Around her, where she sits, the dance
Now breathes its eager heat;
And not more lightly or more true
Fall there the dancers' feet
Than fall her cards on the bright board
As 'twere an heart that beat.

Her fingers let them softly through
Smooth polished silent things;
And each one as it falls reflects
In swift light-shadowings,
Blood-red and purple, green and blue,
The great eyes of her rings.

Whom plays she with? With thee, who lov'st
Those gems upon her hand;
With me, who search her secret brows;
With all men, bless'd or bann'd.
We play together, she and we,
Within a vain strange land:

A land without any order,—
Day even as night, (one saith,)—
Where who lieth down ariseth not
Nor the sleeper awakeneth;
A land of darkness as darkness itself
And of the shadow of death.

What be her cards, you ask? Even these:—
The heart, that doth but crave
More, having fed; the diamond,
Skilled to make base seem brave;
The club, for smiting in the dark;
The spade, to dig a grave.

And do you ask what game she plays?
With me 'tis lost or won;
With thee it is playing still; with him
It is not well begun;
But 'tis a game she plays with all
Beneath the sway o' the sun.

Thou seest the card that falls, she knows
The card that followeth:
Her game in thy tongue is called Life,
As ebbs thy daily breath:
When she shall speak, thou'lt learn her tongue
And know she calls it Death.

ON REFUSAL OF AID BETWEEN NATIONS

Not that the earth is changing, O my God!
Nor that the seasons totter in their walk,—
Not that the virulent ill of act and talk
Seethes ever as a winepress ever trod,—
Not therefore are we certain that the rod
Weighs in thine hand to smite thy world; though now
Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,
So many kings:—not therefore, O my God!—
But because Man is parcelled out in men
To-day; because, for any wrongful blow,
No man not stricken asks, "I would be told
Why thou dost thus;" but his heart whispers then,
"He is he, I am I." By this we know,
That the earth falls asunder, being old.

THE SEA-LIMITS

Consider the sea's listless chime:
  Time's self it is, made audible,—
  The murmur of the earth's own shell.
Secret continuance sublime
  Is the sea's end: our sight may pass
  No furlong further. Since time was,
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath
  The mournfulness of ancient life,
  Enduring always at dull strife.
As the world's heart of rest and wrath,
  Its painful pulse is in the sands.
  Last utterly, the whole sky stands,
Gray and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,
  Listen alone among the woods;
  Those voices of twin solitudes
Shall have one sound alike to thee:
  Hark where the murmurs of thronged men
  Surge and sink back and surge again,—
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
  And listen at its lips: they sigh
  The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole sea's speech.
  And all mankind is thus at heart
  Not anything but what thou art:
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

SISTER HELEN

'Why did you melt your waxen man,
  Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began.'
'The time was long, yet the time ran,
  Little brother.'
  (O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

'But if you have done your work aright,
  Sister Helen,
You'll let me play, for you said I might.'
'Be very still in your play to-night,
  Little brother.'
  (O Mother, Mary Mother,
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

'You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well.'
'Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!'
'Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

'See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!'
'Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door.'
'Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What rest to-night between Hell and Heaven?)

'Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me.'

'Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake.'
'Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

'I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly.'
'Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

'They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar.'
'Look, look, do you know them who they are,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast.'
'The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He has made a sign and called Halloo!
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you.'
'Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and Heaven?)

'The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die.'
'And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
Sister Helen,
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn.'
'For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead.'
'The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
If he have prayed, between Hell and Heaven!)

'But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away.'

'*My* prayer was heard,—he need but pray,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Shall God not hear, between Hell and Heaven?)

'But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can.'
'Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

'But he calls for ever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame.'
'My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast.'
'The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?)

'He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's course.'
'Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What word now heard, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die.'
'In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The soul's one sight, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne.'
'What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain.'
'What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see.'
'Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast.'

'The short, short hour will soon be past,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Will soon be past, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh! his voice is sad and weak!'
'What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?)

'Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies, but the soul shall live.'
'Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive.'
'Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

'He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!'
'The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!)

'A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not.'
'See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What more to see, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Her hood falls back, and the moon shines fair,
Sister Helen,
On the lady of Ewern's golden hair.'
'Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Hour blest and bann'd, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,
Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago.'
'One morn for pride and three days for woe,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,
Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are wed.'
'What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What strains but death's between Hell and Heaven?)

'She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen,—

She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon.'
'Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe tune,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!)

'They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow.'
'Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

'O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen!
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell.'
'No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;
Is it in the sky or in the ground?'
'Say, have they turned their horses round,
Little brother?'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

'They have raised the old man from his knee,
Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily.'
'More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!'

(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,
But the lady's dark steed goes alone.'
'And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath flown,
Little brother.'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,
And weary sad they look by the hill.'
'But he and I are sadder still,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

'See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!'
'Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

'Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen,
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?'
'A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!'
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH

In our Museum galleries
To-day I lingered o'er the prize
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—
Her Art for ever in fresh wise
From hour to hour rejoicing me.
Sighing I turned at last to win
Once more the London dirt and din;
And as I made the swing-door spin
And issued, they were hoisting in
A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er
'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
A dead disbowelled mystery;
The mummy of a buried faith
Stark from the charnal without scathe,
Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—
Such fossil cerements as might swathe
The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush-wrapping,
Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing.
What song did the brown maidens sing,
From purple mouths alternating,
When that was woven languidly?
What vows, what rites, what prayers preferr'd
What songs has the strange image heard?
In what blind vigil stood interr'd
For ages, till an English word
Broke silence first at Nineveh?

Oh when upon each sculptured court,
Where even the wind might not resort,—
O'er which Time passed, of like import
With the wild Arab boys at sport,—
A living face looked in to see:—
Oh seemed it not—the spell once broke—
As though the carven warriors woke,
As though the shaft the string forsook,
The cymbals clashed, the chariots shook,
And there was life in Nineveh?

On London stones our sun anew
The beast's recovered shadow threw.
(No shade that plague of darkness knew,
No light, no shade, while older grew
By ages the old earth and sea.)
Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
Such proof to make thy godhead known?
For their dead Past thou liv'st alone;
And still thy shadow is thine own
Even as of yore in Nineveh.

That day whereof we keep record,
When near thy city-gates the Lord
Sheltered his Jonah with a gourd,
This sun, (I said) here present, pour'd
Even thus this shadow that I see.
This shadow has been shed the same
From sun and moon,—from lamps which came
For prayer,—from fifteen days of flame,
The last, while smouldered to a name
Sardanapalus' Nineveh.

Within thy shadow, haply, once
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons

Smote him between the altar-stones:
Or pale Semiramis her zones
  Of gold, her incense brought to thee,
In love for grace, in war for gold: . . .
Ay, and who else? . . . till 'neath thy shade
Within his trenches newly made
Last year the Christian knelt and pray'd—
  Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.

Now, thou poor god, within this hall
Where the blank windows blind the wall
From pedestal to pedestal,
The kind of light shall on thee fall
  Which London takes the day to be:
While school-foundations in the act
Of holiday, three files compact,
Shall learn to view thee as a fact
Connected with that zealous tract:
  'Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh.'

Deemed they of this, those worshippers,
When, in some mythic chain of verse
Which man shall not again rehearse,
The faces of thy ministers
  Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god
Before whose feet men knelt unshod
Deem that in this unblest abode
Another scarce more unknown god
  Should house with him, from Nineveh?

Ah! in what quarries lay the stone
From which this pygmy pile has grown,
Unto man's need how long unknown,

Since thy vast temples, court and cone,
Rose far in desert history?
Ah! what is here that does not lie
All strange to thine awakened eye?
Ah! what is here can testify
(Save that dumb presence of the sky)
Unto thy day and Nineveh?

Why, of those mummies in the room
Above, there might indeed have come
One out of Egypt to thy home,
An alien. Nay, but were not some
Of these thine own 'antiquity'?
And now,—they and their gods and thou
All relics here together,—now
Whose profit? whether bull or cow,
Isis or Ibis, who or how,
Whether of Thebes or Nineveh?

The consecrated metals found,
And ivory tablets, underground,
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd
When air and daylight filled the mound,
Fell into dust immediately.
And even as these, the images
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—
So, smitten with the sun's increase,
Her glory mouldered and did cease
From immemorial Nineveh.

The day her builders made their halt,
Those cities of the lake of salt
Stood firmly 'stablished without fault,
Made proud with pillars of basalt,
With sardonyx and porphyry.

The day that Jonah bore abroad
To Nineveh the voice of God,
A brackish lake lay in his road,
Where erst Pride fixed her sure abode,
  As then in royal Nineveh.

The day when he, Pride's lord and Man's,
Showed all the kingdoms at a glance
To Him before whose countenance
The years recede, the years advance,
  And said, Fall down and worship me:—
'Mid all the pomp beneath that look,
Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke,
Where to the wind the salt pools shook,
And in those tracts, of life forsook,
  That knew thee not, O Nineveh!

Delicate harlot! On thy throne
Thou with a world beneath thee prone
In state for ages sat'st alone;
And needs were years and lustres flown
  Ere strength of man could vanquish thee:
Whom even thy victor foes must bring,
Still royal, among maids that sing
As with doves' voices, taboring
Upon their breasts, unto the King,—
  A kingly conquest, Nineveh!

. . . . . Here woke my thought. The wind's slow sway
Had waxed; and like the human play
Of scorn that smiling spreads away,
The sunshine shivered off the day;
  The callous wind, it seemed to me,
Swept up the shadow from the ground:

And pale as whom the Fates astound,
The god forlorn stood winged and crown'd;
Within I knew the cry lay bound
Of the dumb soul of Nineveh.

And as I turned, my sense half shut
Still saw the crowds of kerb and rut
Go past as marshalled to the strut
Of ranks in gypsum quaintly cut.
It seemed in one same pageantry
They followed forms which had been erst;
To pass, till on my sight should burst
That future of the best or worst
When some may question which was first,
Of London or of Nineveh!

For as that Bull-god once did stand
And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
Till these at last without a hand
Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
And blinded him with destiny:—
So may he stand again; till now,
In ships of unknown sail and prow,
Some tribe of the Australian plough
Bear him afar,—a relic now
Of London, not of Nineveh!

Or it may chance indeed that when
Man's age is hoary among men,—
His centuries threescore and ten,—
His furthest childhood shall seem then
More clear than later times may be:
Who, finding in this desert place
This form, shall hold us for some race
That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,

But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
Unto the god of Nineveh.

The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh
The thought: . . . Those heavy wings spread high
So sure of flight, which do not fly;
That set gaze never on the sky;
Those scriptured flanks it cannot see;
Its crown, a brow-contracting load;
Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .
(So grew the image as I trod:)
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—
Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

FRANCESCA DA RIMINI

(*From* DANTE)

. . .

When I made answer, I began: 'Alas!
How many sweet thoughts and how much desire
Led these two onward to the dolorous pass!'
Then turned to them, as who would fain inquire,
And said 'Francesca, these thine agonies
Wring tears for pity and grief that they inspire:—
But tell me,—in the season of sweet sighs,
When and what way did Love instruct you so
That he in your vague longings made you wise?'
Then she to me: 'There is no greater woe
Than the remembrance brings of happy days
In Misery; and this thy guide doth know.
But if the first beginnings to retrace
Of our sad love can yield thee solace here,
So will I be as one that weeps and says.
One day we read, for pastime and sweet cheer,
Of Lancelot, how he found Love tyrannous;
We were alone and without any fear.

Our eyes were drawn together, reading thus,
Full oft, and still our cheeks would pale and glow;
But one sole point it was that conquered us.
For when we read of that great lover, how
He kissed the smile which he had longed to win,—
Then he whom naught can sever from me now
Forever, kissed my mouth, all quivering.
A Galahalt was the book, and he that writ:
Upon that day we read no more therein.'
At the tale told, while one soul uttered it,
The other wept: a pang so pitiable
That I was seized, like death, in swooning-fit,
And even as a dead body falls, I fell.

TROY TOWN

Heavenborn Helen, Sparta's queen,
(O Troy Town!)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
All Love's lordship lay between.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,
(O Troy Town!)
Saying "A little gift is mine,
A little gift for a heart's desire.
Hear me speak and make me a sign!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Look, I bring thee a carven cup;
(O Troy Town!)
See it here as I hold it up,—
Shaped it is to the heart's desire,

Fit to fill when the gods would sup.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"It was moulded like my breast;
(O Troy Town!)
He that sees it may not rest,
Rest at all for his heart's desire.
O give ear to my heart's behest!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"See my breast, how like it is;
(O Troy Town!)
See it bare for the air to kiss!
Is the cup to thy heart's desire?
O for the breast, O make it his!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Yea, for my bosom here I sue:
(O Troy Town!)
Thou must give it where 't is due,
Give it there to the heart's desire.
Whom do I give my bosom to?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Each twin breast is an apple sweet!
(O Troy Town!)
Once an apple stirred the beat
Of thy heart with the heart's desire:
Say, who brought it then to thy feet?
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"They that claimed it then were three:
(O Troy Town!)
For thy sake two hearts did he
Make forlorn of the heart's desire.
Do for him as he did for thee!
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Mine are apples grown to the south,
(O Troy Town!)
Grown to taste in the days of drouth,
Taste and waste to the heart's desire:
Mine are apples meet for his mouth!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked on Helen's gift,
(O Troy Town!)
Looked and smiled with subtle drift,
Saw the work of her heart's desire:—
"There thou kneel'st for Love to lift!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked in Helen's face,
(O Troy Town!)
Knew far off an hour and place,
And fire lit from the heart's desire;
Laughed and said, "Thy gift hath grace!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid looked on Helen's breast,
(O Troy Town!)
Saw the heart within its nest,
Saw the flame of the heart's desire,—

Marked his arrow's burning crest.
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid took another dart,
(O Troy Town!)
Fledged it for another heart,
Winged the shaft with the heart's desire,
Drew the string and said, "Depart!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Paris turned upon his bed,
(O Troy Town!)
Turned upon his bed and said,
Dead at heart with the heart's desire,—
"O to clasp her golden head!"
(O Troy's down,
Tall Troy's on fire!)

ASPECTA MEDUSA

(*For a Drawing*)

Andromeda, by Perseus saved and wed,
Hankered each day to see the Gorgon's head:
Till o'er a fount he held it, bade her lean,
And mirrored in the wave was safely seen
That death she lived by.
Let not thine eyes know
Any forbidden thing itself, although
It once should save as well as kill: but be
Its shadow upon life enough for thee.

ON THE 'VITA NUOVA' OF DANTE

As he that loves oft looks on the dear form
And guesses how it grew to womanhood,

And gladly would have watched the beauties bud
And the mild fire of precious life wax warm:—
So I, long bound within the threefold charm
Of Dante's love sublimed to heavenly mood,
Had marvelled, touching his Beatitude,
How grew such presence from man's shameful swarm.

At length within this book I found portrayed
Newborn that Paradisal Love of his,
And simple like a child; with whose clear aid
I understood. To such a child as this,
Christ, charging well his chosen ones, forbade
Offence: 'for lo! of such my kingdom is.'

FIRST LOVE REMEMBERED

Peace in her chamber, wheresoe'er
It be, a holy place:
The thought still brings my soul such grace
As morning meadows wear.

Whether it still be small and light,
A maid's who dreams alone,
As from her orchard-gate the moon
Its ceiling showed at night:

Or whether, in the shadow dense
As nuptial hymns invoke,
Innocent maidenhood awoke
To married innocence:

There still the thanks unheard await
The unconscious gift bequeathed;
For there my soul this hour has breathed
An air inviolate.

PLIGHTED PROMISE

In a soft-complexioned sky,
  Fleeting rose and kindling gray,
Have you seen Aurora fly
  At the break of day?
So my maiden, so my plighted may
  Blushing cheek and gleaming eye
    Lifts to look my way.

Where the inmost leaf is stirred
  With the heart-beat of the grove,
Have you heard a hidden bird
  Cast her note above?
So my lady, so my lovely love,
  Echoing Cupid's prompted word,
    Makes a tune thereof.

Have you seen, at heaven's mid-height,
  In the moon-rack's ebb and tide,
Venus leap forth burning white,
  Dian pale and hide?
So my bright breast-jewel, so my bride,
  One sweet night, when fear takes flight,
    Shall leap against my side.

PENUMBRA

I did not look upon her eyes,
(Though scarcely seen, with no surprise,
'Mid many eyes a single look,)
Because they should not gaze rebuke,
At night, from stars in sky and brook.

I did not take her by the hand,
(Though little was to understand
From touch of hand all friends might take,)
Because it should not prove a flake
Burnt in my palm to boil and ache.

I did not listen to her voice,
(Though none had noted, where at choice
All might rejoice in listening,)
Because no such a thing should cling
In the wood's moan at evening.

I did not cross her shadow once,
(Though from the hollow west the sun's
Last shadow runs along so far,)
Because in June it should not bar
My ways, at noon when fevers are.

They told me she was sad that day,
(Though wherefore tell what love's soothsay.
Sooner than they, did register?)
And my heart leapt and wept to her,
And yet I did not speak nor stir.

So shall the tongues of the sea's foam
(Though many voices therewith come
From drowned hope's home to cry to me,)
Bewail one hour the more, when sea
And wind are one with memory.

THE HONEYSUCKLE

I PLUCKED a honeysuckle where
The hedge on high is quick with thorn,
And climbing for the prize, was torn,

And fouled my feet in quag-water;
And by the thorns and by the wind
The blossoms that I took was thinn'd,
And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,
Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,
The honeysuckles sprang by scores,
Not harried like my single stem,
All virgin lamps of scent and dew.
So from my hand that first I threw,
Yet plucked not any more of them.

THE WOODSPURGE

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,—
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

PARTED PRESENCE

Love, I speak to your heart,
  Your heart that is always here.
  Oh draw me deep to its sphere,
Though you and I are apart;
And yield, by the spirit's art,
  Each distant gift that is dear.
  O love, my love, you are here!

Your eyes are afar to-day,
  Yet, love, look now in mine eyes.
  Two hearts sent forth may despise
All dead things by the way.
All between is decay,
  Dead hours and this hour that dies,
  O love, look deep in mine eyes!

Your hands to-day are not here,
  Yet lay them, love, in my hands.
  The hourglass sheds its sands
All day for the dead hours' bier;
But now, as two hearts draw near,
  This hour like a flower expands.
  O love, your hands in my hands!

Your voice is not on the air,
  Yet, love, I can hear your voice:
  It bids my heart to rejoice
As knowing your heart is there,—
A music sweet to declare
  The truth of your steadfast choice.
  O love, how sweet is your voice!

To-day your lips are afar,
  Yet draw my lips to them, love.
  Around, beneath, and above,
Is frost to bind and to bar;
But where I am and you are,
  Desire and the fire thereof.
  O kiss me, kiss me, my love!

Your heart is never away,
  But ever with me, for ever,
  For ever without endeavor,
To-morrow, love, as to-day;
Two blent hearts never astray
  Two souls no power may sever,
  Together, O my love, for ever!

THE WHITE SHIP

HENRY I. OF ENGLAND.—25TH NOV., 1120

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
  (Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)
'T was a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
  (The sea hath no King but God alone.)

King Henry held it as life's whole gain
That after his death his son should reign.

'Twas so in my youth I heard men say,
And my old age calls it back to-day.

King Henry of England's realm was he,
And Henry Duke of Normandy.

The times had changed when on either coast
"Clerkly Harry" was all his boast.

Of ruthless strokes full many an one
He had struck to crown himself and his son;
And his elder brother's eyes were gone.

And when to the chase his court would crowd,
The poor flung ploughshares on his road,
And shrieked: "Our cry is from King to God!"

But all the chiefs of the English land
Had knelt and kissed the Prince's hand.

And next with his son he sailed to France
To claim the Norman allegiance:

And every baron in Normandy
Had taken the oath of fealty.

'T was sworn and sealed, and the day had come
When the King and the Prince might journey home:

For Christmas cheer is to home hearts dear,
And Christmas now was drawing near.

Stout Fitz-Stephen came to the King,—
A pilot famous in seafaring;

And he held to the King, in all men's sight,
A mark of gold for his tribute's right.

"Liege Lord! my father guided the ship
From whose boat your father's foot did slip
When he caught the English soil in his grip,

"And cried: 'By this clasp I claim command
O'er every rood of English land!'

"He was borne to the realm you rule o'er now
In that ship with the archer carved at her prow:

"And thither I'll bear, an' it be my due,
Your father's son and his grandson too.

"The famed White Ship is mine in the bay;
From Harfleur's harbor she sails to-day,

"With masts fair-pennoned as Norman spears
And with fifty well-tried mariners."

Quoth the King: "My ships are chosen each one,
But I'll not say nay to Stephen's son.

"My son and daughter and fellowship
Shall cross the water in the White Ship."

The King set sail with the eve's south wind,
And soon he left that coast behind.

The Prince and all his, a princely show,
Remained in the good White Ship to go.

With noble knights and with ladies fair,
With courtiers and sailors gathered there,
Three hundred living souls we were:

And I Berold was the meanest hind
In all that train to the Prince assign'd.

The Prince was a lawless shameless youth;
From his father's loins he sprang without ruth:

Eighteen years till then he had seen,
And the devil's dues in him were eighteen.

And now he cried: "Bring wine from below;
Let the sailors revel ere yet they row:

"Our speed shall o'ertake my father's flight
Though we sail from the harbor at midnight."

The rowers made good cheer without check;
The lords and ladies obeyed his beck;
The night was light, and they danced on the deck.

But at midnight's stroke they cleared the bay,
And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
To the double flight of the ship and the moon:

Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead:

As white as a lily glimmered she
Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea.

And the Prince cried, "Friends, 't is the hour to sing!
Is a songbird's course so swift on the wing?"

And under the winter stars' still throng,
From brown throats, white throats, merry and strong,
The knights and the ladies raised a song.

A song,—nay, a shriek that rent the sky,
That leaped o'er the deep!—the grievous cry
Of three hundred living that now must die.

An instant shriek that sprang to the shock
As the ship's keel felt the sunken rock.

'T is said that afar—a shrill strange sigh—
The King's ships heard it and knew not why.

Pale Fitz-Stephen stood by the helm
'Mid all those folk that the waves must whelm.

A great King's heir for the waves to whelm,
And the helpless pilot pale at the helm!

The ship was eager and sucked athirst,
By the stealthy stab of the sharp reef pierc'd:

And like the moil round a sinking cup,
The waters against her crowded up.

A moment the pilot's senses spin,—
The next he snatched the Prince 'mid the din,
Cut the boat loose, and the youth leaped in.

A few friends leaped with him, standing near.
"Row! the sea's smooth and the night is clear!"

"What! none to be saved but these and I?"
"Row, row as you'd live! All here must die!"

Out of the churn of the choking ship,
Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,
They struck with the strained oars' flash and dip.

'T was then o'er the splitting bulwarks' brim
The Prince's sister screamed to him.

He gazed aloft, still rowing apace,
And through the whirled surf he knew her face.

To the toppling decks clave one and all
As a fly cleaves to a chamber-wall.

I Berold was clinging anear;
I prayed for myself and quaked with fear,
But I saw his eyes as he looked at her.

He knew her face and he heard her cry,
And he said, "Put back! she must not die!"

And back with the current's force they reel
Like a leaf that's drawn to a water-wheel.

'Neath the ship's travail they scarce might float,
But he rose and stood in the rocking boat.

Low the poor ship leaned on the tide:
O'er the naked keel as she best might slide,
The sister toiled to the brother's side.

He reached an oar to her from below,
And stiffened his arms to clutch her so.

But now from the ship some spied the boat,
And "Saved!" was the cry from many a throat.

And down to the boat they leaped and fell:
It turned as a bucket turns in a well,
And nothing was there but the surge and swell.

The Prince that was and the King to come,
There in an instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee
And maugre the Norman fealty!

He was a Prince of lust and pride;
He showed no grace till the hour he died.

When he should be King, he oft would vow,
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake,
But I saw him die for his sister's sake.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)

'T was a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

And now the end came o'er the water's womb
Like the last great Day that's yet to come.

With prayers in vain and curses in vain,
The White Ship sundered on the mid-main:

And what were men and what was a ship
Were toys and splinters in the sea's grip.

I Berold was down in the sea;
And passing strange though the thing may be,
Of dreams then known I remember me.

Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand
When morning lights the sails to land:

And blithe is Honfleur's echoing gloam
When mothers call the children home:

And high do the bells of Rouen beat
When the Body of Christ goes down the street.

These things and the like were heard and shown
In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone;

And when I rose, 't was the sea did seem,
And not these things, to be all a dream.

The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
And the deep shuddered and the moon shone:

And in a strait grasp my arms did span
The mainyard rent from the mast where it ran;
And on it with me was another man.

Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky,
We told our names, that man and I.

"O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,
And son I am to a belted knight."

"And I am Berold the butcher's son
Who slays the beasts in Rouen town."

Then cried we upon God's name, as we
Did drift on the bitter winter sea.

But lo! a third man rose o'er the wave,
And we said, "Thank God! us three may He save!"

He clutched to the yard with panting stare,
And we looked and knew Fitz-Stephen there.

He clung, and "What of the Prince?" quoth he.
"Lost, lost!" we cried. He cried, "Woe on me!"
And loosed his hold and sank through the sea.

And soul with soul again in that space
We two were together face to face:

And each knew each, as the moments sped,
Less for one living than for one dead:

And every still star overhead
Seemed an eye that knew we were but dead.

And the hours passed; till the noble's son
Sighed, "God be thy help! my strength's foredone!

"O farewell, friend, for I can no more!"
"Christ take thee!" I moaned; and his life was o'er.

Three hundred souls were all lost but one,
And I drifted over the sea alone.

At last the morning rose on the sea
Like an angel's wing that beat tow'rds me.

Sore numbed I was in my sheepskin coat;
Half dead I hung, and might nothing note,
Till I woke sun-warmed in a fisher-boat.

The sun was high o'er the eastern brim
As I praised God and gave thanks to Him.

That day I told my tale to a priest,
Who charged me, till the shrift were releas'd,
That I should keep it in mine own breast.

And with the priest I thence did fare
To King Henry's court at Winchester.

We spoke with the King's high chamberlain,
And he wept and mourned again and again,
As if his own son had been slain:

And round us ever there crowded fast
Great men with faces all aghast:

And who so bold that might tell the thing
Which now they knew to their lord the King?
Much woe I learnt in their communing.

The King had watched with a heart sore stirred
For two whole days, and this was the third:

And still to all his court would he say,
"What keeps my son so long away?"

And they said: "The ports lie far and wide
That skirt the swell of the English tide;

"And England's cliffs are not more white
Than her women are, and scarce so light
Her skies as their eyes are blue and bright;

"And in some port that he reached from France
The Prince has lingered for his pleasaunce."

But once the King asked: "What distant cry
Was that we heard 'twixt the sea and sky?"

And one said: "With suchlike shouts, pardie!
Do the fishers fling their nets at sea."

And one: "Who knows not the shrieking quest
When the sea-mew misses its young from the nest?"

'Twas thus till now they had soothed his dread,
Albeit they knew not what they said:

But who should speak to-day of the thing
That all knew there except the King?

Then pondering much they found a way,
And met round the King's high seat that day:

And the King sat with a heart sore stirred,
And seldom he spoke and seldom heard.

'Twas then through the hall the King was 'ware
Of a little boy with golden hair,

As bright as the golden poppy is
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss:

Yet pale his cheek as the thorn in Spring,
And his garb black like the raven's wing.

Nothing heard but his foot through the hall,
For now the lords were silent all.

And the King wondered, and said, "Alack!
Who send me a fair boy dressed in black?

"Why, sweet heart, do you pace through the hall
As though my court were a funeral?"

Then lowly knelt the child at the dais,
And looked up weeping in the King's face.

"O wherefore, O King, ye may say,
For white is the hue of death to-day.

"Your son and all his fellowship
Lie low in the sea with the White Ship."

King Henry fell as a man struck dead;
And speechless still he stared from his bed
When to him next day my rede I read.

There's many an hour must needs beguile
A King's high heart that he should smile,—

Full many a lordly hour, full fain
Of his realm's rule and pride of his reign:—

But this King never smiled again.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

From THE HOUSE OF LIFE

THE SONNET

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The Soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

PART I. YOUTH AND CHANGE

I. LOVE ENTHRONED

I MARKED all kindred Powers the heart finds fair:—
Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with eyes upcast;
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;
And Youth, with still some single golden hair
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held him fast;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death to wear.
Love's throne was not with these; but far above
All passionate wind of welcome and farewell
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of;

Though Truth foreknow Love's heart, and Hope foretell,
And Fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to Love.

II. BRIDAL BIRTH

As when desire, long darkling, dawns, and first
The mother looks upon the new-born child,
Even so my Lady stood at gaze and smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it nurs'd.
Born with her life, creature of poignant thirst
And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love lay
Quickening in darkness, till a voice that day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were burst.
Now, shadowed by his wings, our faces yearn
Together, as his fullgrown feet now range
The grove, and his warm hands our couch prepare:
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
Be born his children, when Death's nuptial change
Leaves us for light the halo of his hair.

III. LOVE'S TESTAMENT

O thou who at Love's hour ecstatically
Unto my heart dost ever more present,
Clothed with his fire, thy heart his testament;
Whom I have neared and felt thy breath to be
The inmost incense of his sanctuary;
Who without speech hast owned him, and, intent
Upon his will, thy life with mine hast blent,
And murmured, "I am thine, thou 'rt one with me!"
O what from thee the grace, to me the prize,
And what to Love the glory,—when the whole
Of the deep stair thou tread'st to the dim shoal
And weary water of the place of sighs,

And there dost work deliverance, as thine eyes
Draw up my prisoned spirit to thy soul!

IV. LOVESIGHT

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone,)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?
O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

VIII. LOVE'S LOVERS

Some ladies love the jewels in Love's zone
And gold-tipped darts he hath for painless play
In idle scornful hours he flings away;
And some that listen to his lute's soft tone
Do love to vaunt the silver praise their own;
Some prize his blindfold sight; and there be they
Who kissed his wings which brought him yesterday
And thank his wings to-day that he is flown.
My lady only loves the heart of Love:
Therefore Love's heart, my lady, hath for thee
His bower of unimagined flower and tree:
There kneels he now, and all-anhungered of
Thine eyes gray-lit in shadowing hair above,
Seals with thy mouth his immortality.

X. THE PORTRAIT

O Lord of all compassionate control,
O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
That he who seeks her beauty's furtherest goal,
Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw
And refluent wave of the sweet smile, may know
The very sky and sea-line of her soul.
Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat
The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

XI. THE LOVE-LETTER

Warmed by her hand and shadowed by her hair
As close she leaned and poured her heart through thee,
Whereof the articulate throbs accompany
The smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair,—
Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath aware,—
Oh let thy silent song disclose to me
That soul wherewith her lips and eyes agree
Like married music in Love's answering air.
Fain had I watched her when, at some fond thought,
Her bosom to the writing closelier press'd,
And her breast's secrets peered into her breast;
When, through eyes raised an instant, her soul sought
My soul, and from the sudden confluence caught
The words that made her love the loveliest.

XIII. YOUTH'S ANTIPHONY

"I LOVE you, sweet: how can you ever learn
How much I love you?" "You I love even so,
And so I learn it." "Sweet, you cannot know
How fair you are." "If fair enough to earn
Your love, so much is all my love's concern."
"My love grows hourly, sweet." "Mine too doth grow,
Yet love seemed full so many hours ago!"
Thus lovers speak, till kisses claim their turn.
Ah! happy they to whom such words as these
In youth have served for speech the whole day long,
Hour after hour, remote from the world's throng,
Work, contest, fame, all life's confederate pleas,—
What while Love breathed in sighs and silences
Through two blent souls one rapturous undersong.

XV. THE BIRTH-BOND

HAVE you not noted, in some family
Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,
How still they own their gracious bond, though fed
And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee?—
How to their father's children they shall be
In act and thought of one goodwill; but each
Shall for the other have, in silence speech,
And in a word complete community?
Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

XVIII. GENIUS IN BEAUTY

Beauty like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante s heart sublime,—
Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time,—
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeathes
Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.
As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
Even through all change the indomitable song;
So in like wise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

XX. GRACIOUS MOONLIGHT

Even as the moon grows queenlier in mid-space
When the sky darkens, and her cloud-rapt car
Thrills with intenser radiance from afar,—
So lambent, lady, beams thy sovereign grace
When the drear soul desires thee. Of that face
What shall be said,—which, like a governing star,
Gathers and garners from all things that are
Their silent penetrative loveliness?
O'er water-daisies and wild waifs of Spring,
There where the iris rears its gold-crowned sheaf
With flowering rush and sceptred arrow-leaf,
So have I marked Queen Dian, in bright ring
Of cloud above and wave below, take wing
And chase night's gloom, as thou the spirit's grief.

XXV. WINGED HOURS

Each hour until we meet is as a bird
That wings from far his gradual way along
The rustling covert of my soul,—his song
Still loudlier trilled through leaves more deeply stirr'd:
But at the hour of meeting, a clear word
Is every note he sings, in Love's own tongue;
Yet, Love, thou know'st the sweet strain suffers wrong.
Full oft through our contending joys unheard.
What of that hour at last, when for her sake
No wing may fly to me nor song may flow;
When, wandering round my life unleaved, I know
The bloodied feathers scattered in the brake,
And think how she, far from me, with like eyes
Sees through the untuneful bough the wingless skies?

XXVII. HEART'S COMPASS

Sometimes thou seem'st not as thyself alone,
But as the meaning of all things that are;
A breathless wonder, shadowing forth afar
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon;
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone;
Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul unbar,
Being of its furthest fires oracular;—
The evident heart of all life sown and mown.
Even such Love is; and is not thy name Love?
Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends apart
All gathering clouds of Night's ambiguous art;
Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes above;
And simply, as some gage of flower or glove,
Stakes with a smile the world against thy heart.

XXXI. HER GIFTS

High grace, the dower of queens; and therewithal
Some wood-born wonder's sweet simplicity;
A glance like water brimming with the sky
Or hyacinth-light where forest-shadows fall;
Such thrilling pallor of cheek as doth enthral
The heart; a mouth whose passionate forms imply
All music and all silence held thereby;
Deep golden locks, her sovereign coronal;
A round reared neck, meet column of Love's shrine
To cling to when the heart takes sanctuary;
Hands which for ever at Love's bidding be,
And soft-stirred feet still answering to his sign:—
These are her gifts, as tongue may tell them o'er.
Breathe low her name, my soul; for that means more.

XXXIII. VENUS VICTRIX

Could Juno's self more sovereign presence wear
Than thou, 'mid other ladies throned in grace?—
Or Pallas, when thou bend'st with soul-stilled face
O'er poet's page gold-shadowed in thy hair?
Dost thou than Venus seem less heavenly fair
When o'er the sea of love's tumultuous trance
Hovers thy smile, and mingles with thy glance
That sweet voice like the last wave murmuring there?
Before such triune loveliness divine
Awestruck I ask, which goddess here most claims
The prize that, howsoe'er adjudged, is thine?
Then Love breathes low the sweetest of thy names;
And Venus Victrix to my heart doth bring
Herself, the Helen of her guerdoning.

XL. SEVERED SELVES

Two separate divided silences,
Which, brought together, would find loving voice;
Two glances which together would rejoice
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark trees;
Two hands apart whose touch alone gives ease;
Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with mutual flame,
Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the same;
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of sundering seas:—
Such are we now. Ah! may our hope forecast
Indeed one hour again, when on this stream
Of darkened love once more the light shall gleam?—
An hour how slow to come, how quickly past,—
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves at last,
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated dream.

XLIX. WILLOWWOOD—I

I SAT with Love upon a woodside well,
Leaning across the water, I and he;
Nor ever did he speak nor looked at me,
But touched his lute wherein was audible
The certain secret thing he had to tell:
Only our mirrored eyes met silently
In the low wave; and that sound came to be
The passionate voice I knew; and my tears fell.
And at their fall, his eyes beneath grew hers;
And with his foot and with his wing-feathers
He swept the spring that watered my heart's drouth.
Then the dark ripples spread to waving hair,
And as I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth.

L. WILLOWWOOD—II

And now Love sang: but his was such a song,
So meshed with half-remembrance hard to free,
As souls disused in death's sterility
May sing when the new birthday tarries long.
And I was made aware of a dumb throng
That stood aloof, one form by every tree,
All mournful forms, for each was I or she,
The shades of those our days that had no tongue.
They looked on us, and knew us and were known;
While fast together, alive from the abyss,
Clung the soul-wrung implacable close kiss;
And pity of self through all made broken moan
Which said, "For once, for once, for once alone!"
And still Love sang, and what he sang was this:—

LI. WILLOWWOOD—III

"O ye, all ye that walk in Willowwood,
That walk with hollow faces burning white;
What fathom-depth of soul-struck widowhood,
What long, what longer hours, one life-long night,
Ere ye again, who so in vain have wooed
Your last hope lost, who so in vain invite
Your lips to that their unforgotten food,
Ere ye, ere ye again shall see the light!
Alas! the bitter banks in Willowwood,
With tear-spurge wan, with blood-wort burning red:
Alas! if ever such a pillow could
Steep deep the soul in sleep till she were dead,—
Better all life forget her than this thing,
That Willowwood should hold her wandering!"

LII. WILLOWWOOD—IV

So sang he: and as meeting rose and rose
Together cling through the wind's well-away
Nor change at once, yet near the end of day
The leaves drop loosened where the heart-stain glows,—
So when the song died did the kiss unclose;
And her face fell back drowned, and was as gray
As its gray eyes; and if it ever may
Meet mine again I know not if Love knows.
Only I know that I leaned low and drank
A long draught from the water where she sank.
Her breath and all her tears and all her soul:
And as I leaned, I know I felt Love's face
Pressed on my neck with moan of pity and grace,
Till both our heads were in his aureole.

LV. STILLBORN LOVE

The hour which might have been yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.
But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned:—
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

PART II. CHANGE AND FATE

LX. TRANSFIGURED LIFE

As growth of form or momentary glance
In a child's features will recall to mind
The father's with the mother's face combin'd,—
Sweet interchange that memories still enhance:
And yet, as childhood's years and youth's advance,
The gradual mouldings leave one stamp behind,
Till in the blended likeness now we find
A separate man's or woman's countenance:—
So in the Song, the singer's Joy and Pain,
Its very parents, evermore expand
To bid the passion's fullgrown birth remain,
By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd;
And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand
There comes the sound as of abundant rain.

LXIII. INCLUSIVENESS

The changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise:
And every life among them in likewise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?
May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell
In separate living souls for joy or pain?
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

LXXI. THE CHOICE—I

Eat thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I
May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.
We'll drown all hours: thy song, while hours are toll'd,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.
Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way!
Through many years they toil; then on a day
They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

LXXII. THE CHOICE—II

Watch thou and fear; to-morrow thou shalt die.
O art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth: can I
Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the daylight here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?
Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell? Go to:
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

LXXIII. THE CHOICE—III

Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be? Art thou then so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou should'st reap thereby?
Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

LXXXIV. FAREWELL TO THE GLEN

Sweet stream-fed glen, why say "farewell" to thee
Who far'st so well and find'st for ever smooth
The brow of Time where man may read no ruth?
Nay, do thou rather say "farewell" to me,
Who now fare forth in bitterer fantasy
Than erst was mine where other shade might soothe
By other streams, what while in fragrant youth
The bliss of being sad made melancholy.
And yet, farewell! For better shalt thou fare
When children bathe sweet faces in thy flow
And happy lovers blend sweet shadows there
In hours to come, than when an hour ago
Time echoes had but one man's sighs to bear
And thy trees whispered what he feared to know.

XC. "RETRO ME, SATHANA!"

Get thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curled,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world:
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days.

CI. THE ONE HOPE

When vain desire at last and vain regret
Go hand in hand to death, and all in vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
Or may the soul at once in a green plain
Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?
Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
Between the scriptured petals softly blown
Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

FIVE ENGLISH POETS

I. THOMAS CHATTERTON

With Shakespeare's manhood at a boy's wild heart,—
Through Hamlet's doubt to Shakespeare near allied,
And kin to Milton through his Satan's pride,—
At Death's sole door he stooped, and craved a dart;
And to the dear new bower of England's art,—
Even to that shrine Time else had defied,
The unuttered heart that soared against his side,—
Drove the fell point, and smote life's seals apart.
They nested home-loves, noble Chatterton;
The angel-trodden stair thy soul could trace
Up Redcliffe's spire; in the world's armed space
Thy gallant sword-play:—these to many an one
Are sweet for ever; as thy grave unknown
And love-dream of thine unrecorded face.

II. WILLIAM BLAKE

(To Frederick Shields, on his Sketch of Blake's work-room and death-room, 3 Fountain Court, Strand.)

This is the place. Even here the dauntless soul,
The unflinching hand, wrought on; till in that nook,
As on that very bed, his life partook
New birth, and passed. Yon river's dusky shoal,
Whereto the close-built coiling lanes unroll,
Faced his work-window, whence his eyes would stare,
Thought-wandering, unto nought that met them there,
But to the unfettered irreversible goal.
This cupboard, Holy of Holies, held the cloud
Of his soul writ and limned; this other one,
His true wife's charge, full oft to their abode

Yielded for daily bread the martyr's stone,
Ere yet their food might be that Bread alone,
The words now home-speech of the mouth of God.

III. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

His Soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest,)
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love.
Yet ah! Like desert pools that show the stars
Once in long leagues,—even such the scarce-snatched hours
Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers:—
Heaven lost through spider-trammelled prison-bars.
Six years, from sixty saved! Yet kindling skies
Own them, a beacon to our centuries.

IV. JOHN KEATS

The weltering London ways where children weep
And girls whom none call maidens laugh,—strange road
Miring his outward steps, who inly trode
The bright Castalian brink and Latmos' steep:—
Even such his life's cross-paths; till deathly deep
He toiled through sands of Lethe; and long pain,
Weary with labor spurned and love found vain,
In dead Rome's sheltering shadow wrapped his sleep.
O pang-dowered Poet, whose reverberant lips
And heart-strung lyre awoke the Moon's eclipse,—

Thou whom the daisies glory in growing o'er,—
Their fragrance clings around thy name, not writ
But rumor'd in water, while the fame of it
Along Time's flood goes echoing evermore.

V. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(INSCRIPTION FOR THE COUCH, STILL PRESERVED, ON WHICH HE PASSED THE LAST NIGHT OF HIS LIFE.)

'Twixt those twin worlds,—the world of Sleep, which gave
No dream to warm,—the tidal world of Death,
Which the earth's sea, as the earth, replenisheth,—
Shelley, Song's orient sun, to breast the wave,
Rose from this couch that morn. Ah! did he brave
Only the sea?—or did man's deed of hell
Engulf his bark 'mid mists impenetrable? . . .
No eye discerned, nor any power might save.
When that mist cleared, O Shelley! what dread veil
Was rent for thee, to whom far-darkling Truth
Reigned sovereign guide through thy brief ageless youth?
Was the Truth *thy* Truth, Shelley?—Hush! All-Hail,
Past doubt, thou gav'st it; and in Truth's bright sphere
Art first of praisers, being most praiséd here.

GEORGE MEREDITH

GEORGE MEREDITH

1828 Born at Portsmouth; educated at the Moravian school at Neuwied where he became fluent in German. For a short time he was interested in law; then turned to literature.

1849 Married daughter of Thomas Love Peacock; they separated in 1858; she died three years later.

1851 Published his first volume of *Poems.*

1855 Published *The Shaving of Shagpat,* a novel, and four years later *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.*

1862 Published *Modern Love.*

1864 Second Marriage.

1866 Served as war correspondent in Italy and Austria. Gathered material for *Vittoria,* published the next year.

1879 Published *The Egoist.* From this time on Meredith lived in quiet seclusion at Boxhill, near London.

1883 *Poems and Lyrics of Joy of Earth* appeared.

1887 Published *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life.*

1888 *A Reading of Earth* was published.

1892 Two volumes of poems were published: *Poems and Modern Love, The Sage Enamoured.*

1901 Published *A Reading of Life.*

1905 Received Order of Merit.

1909 Published *Last Poems.* Died

SONG

Love within the lover's breast
Burns like Hesper in the west,
O'er the ashes of the sun,
Till the day and night are done;
Then when dawn drives up her car—
Lo! it is the morning star.

Love! thy love pours down on mine
As the sunlight on the vine,
As the snow-rill on the vale,
As the salt breeze in the sail;
As the song unto the bird,
On my lips thy name is heard.

As a dewdrop on the rose
In thy heart my passion glows,
As a skylark to the sky
Up into thy breast I fly;
As a sea-shell of the sea
Ever shall I sing of thee.

THE WILD ROSE AND THE SNOWDROP

The Snowdrop is the prophet of the flowers;
It lives and dies upon its bed of snows;
And like a thought of spring it comes and goes,
Hanging its head beside our leafless bowers.
The sun's betrothing kiss it never knows,
Nor all the glowing joy of golden showers;
But ever in a placid, pure repose,

More like a spirit with its look serene,
Droops its pale cheek veined thro' with infant green.

Queen of her sisters is the sweet Wild Rose,
Sprung from the earnest sun and ripe young June;
The year's own darling and the Summer's Queen!
Lustrous as the new-throned crescent moon.
Much of that early prophet look she shows,
Mixed with her fair espoused blush which glows,
As if the ethereal fairy blood were seen;
Like a soft evening over sunset snows,
Half twilight violet shade, half crimson sheen.

Twin-born are both in beauteousness, most fair
In all that glads the eye and charms the air;
In all that wakes emotions in the mind
And sows sweet sympathies for human kind.
Twin-born, albeit their seasons are apart,
They bloom together in the thoughtful heart;
Fair symbols of the marvels of our state,
Mute speakers of the oracles of fate!

For each, fulfilling nature's laws, fulfils
Itself and its own aspirations pure;
Living and dying; letting faith ensure
New life when deathless Spring shall touch the hills.
Each perfect in its place; and each content
With that perfection which its being meant:
Divided not by months that intervene,
But linked by all the flowers that bud between,
Forever smiling thro' its season brief,
The one in glory and the one in grief:
Forever painting to our museful sight,
How lowlihead and loveliness unite.

Born from the first blind yearning of the earth
To be a mother and give happy birth,
Ere yet the northern sun such rapture brings,
Lo, from her virgin breast the Snowdrop springs;
And ere the snows have melted from the grass,
And not a strip of greensward doth appear,
Save the faint prophecy its cheeks declare,
Alone, unkissed, unloved, behold it pass!
While in the ripe enthronement of the year,
Whispering the breeze, and wedding the rich air
With her so sweet, delicious bridal breath,—
Odorous and exquisite beyond compare,
And starr'd with dews upon her forehead clear,
Fresh-hearted as a Maiden Queen should be
Who takes the land's devotion as her fee,—
The Wild Rose blooms, all summer for her dower,
Nature's most beautiful and perfect flower.

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard Chaunticlere.
Tender to tearfulness—childlike, and manly, and motherly,
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet English ground.

THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance;

Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright
palaces;
Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst
ladies and knights.

THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming
ocean;—
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like
above it;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by
one great human heart.

THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand in-
spiration,
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout
the bright spheres.

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets as-
cending
Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it flut-
ters—
Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings
down at eve.

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A Breath of the mountains, fresh born in the regions
majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep into the
sky.
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her lofty
conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the green
lowly vale.

THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the dolorous
sound,
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearning of
passion
That wins immortality even while panting delirious with
death.

VIOLETS

Violets, shy violets!
How many hearts with you compare!
Who hide themselves in thickest green,
And thence, unseen,
Ravish the enraptured air
With sweetness, dewy fresh and rare!

Violets, shy violets!
Human hearts to me shall be
Viewless violets in the grass,
And as I pass,
Odours and sweet imagery
Will wait on mine and gladden me!

REQUIEM

WHERE faces are hueless, where eyelids are dewless,
Where passion is silent and hearts never crave;
Where thought hath no theme, and where sleep hath no dream,
In patience and peace thou art gone—to thy grave!
Gone where no warning can wake thee to morning,
Death tho' a thousand hands stretch'd out to save.

Thou cam'st to us sighing, and singing and dying,
How could it be otherwise, fair as thou wert?
Placidly fading, and sinking and shading
At last to that shadow, the latest desert;
Wasting and waning, but still, still remaining.
Alas for the hand that could deal the death-hurt!

The Summer that brightens, the Winter that whitens,
The world and its voices, the sea and the sky,
The bloom of creation, the tie of relation,
All—all is a blank to thine ear and thine eye;
The ear may not listen, the eye may not glisten,
Nevermore waked by a smile or a sigh.

The tree that is rootless must ever be fruitless;
And thou art alone in thy death and thy birth;
No last loving token of wedded love broken,
No sign of thy singleness, sweetness and worth;
Lost as the flower that is drowned in the shower,
Fall'n like a snowflake to melt in the earth.

OVER THE HILLS

THE old hound wags his shaggy tail,
And I know what he would say:

It's over the hills we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills, and away.

There's nought for us here save to count the clock,
And hang the head all day:
But over the hills we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

Here among men we're like the deer
That yonder is our prey:
So, over the hills we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The hypocrite is master here,
But he's the cock of clay:
So, over the hills we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The women, they shall sigh and smile,
And madden whom they may:
It's over the hills we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

Let silly lads in couples run
To pleasure, a wicked fay:
'Tis ours on the heather to bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The torrent glints under the rowan red,
And shakes the bracken spray:
What joy on the heather to bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

The sun bursts broad, and the heathery bed
Is purple, and orange, and gray:

Away, and away, we'll bound, old hound,
Over the hills and away.

JUGGLING JERRY

Pitch here the tent, while the old horse grazes:
By the old hedge-side we'll halt a stage.
It's nigh my last above the daisies:
My next leaf 'll be man's blank page,
Yes, my old girl! and it's no use crying:
Juggler, constable, king, must bow.
One that outjuggles all's been spying
Long to have me, and has me now.

We've traveled times to this old common:
Often we've hung our pots in the gorse.
We've had a stirring life, old woman!
You, and I, and the old gray horse.
Races, and fairs, and royal occasions,
Found us coming to their call:
Now they'll miss us at our stations:
There's a Juggler outjuggles all!

Up goes the lark, as if all were jolly!
Over the duck-pond the willow shakes,
It's easy to think that grieving's folly,
When the hand's firm as driven stakes!
Ay, when we're strong, and braced, and manful,
Life's a sweet fiddle, but we're a batch
Born to become the Great Juggler's han'ful:
Balls he shies up, and is safe to catch.

Here's where the lads of the village cricket:
I was a lad not wide from here:

Couldn't I juggle the bale off the wicket?
  Like an old world those days appear!
Donkey, sheep, geese and thatched alehouse—I know
    them!
  They are old friends of my halts, and seem,
Somehow, as if kind thanks I owe them:
  Juggling don't hinder the heart's esteem.

Juggling's no sin, for we must have victual:
  Nature allows us to bait for the fool.
Holding one's own makes us juggle no little;
  But, to increase it, hard juggling's the rule.
You that are sneering at my profession,
  Haven't you juggled a vast amount?
There's the Prime Minister, in one Session,
  Juggles more games than my sins'll count.

I've murdered insects with mock thunder:
  Conscience, for that, in men don't quail.
I've made bread from the bump of wonder:
  That's my business, and there's my tale.
Fashion and rank all praised the professor;
  Ay! and I've had my smile from the Queen:
Bravo, Jerry! she meant: God bless her!
  Ain't this a sermon on that scene?

I've studied men from my topsy-turvy
  Close, and, I reckon, rather true.
Some are fine fellows: some, right scurvy;
  Most, a dash between the two.
But it's a woman, old girl, that makes me
  Think more kindly of the race:
And it's a woman, old girl, that shakes me
  When the Great Juggler I must face.

We two were married, due and legal:
  Honest we've lived since we've been one.
Lord! I could then jump like an eagle:
  You danced bright as a bit o' the sun.
Birds in a May-bush we were! right merry!
  All night we kissed, we juggled all day.
Joy was the heart of Juggling Jerry!
  Now from his old girl he's juggled away.

It's past parsons to console us;
  No, nor no doctor fetch for me:
I can die without my bolus;
  Two of a trade, lass, never agree!
Parson and Doctor—don't they love rarely,
  Fighting the devil in other men's fields!
Stand up yourself and match him fairly:
  Then see how the rascal yields!

I, lass, have lived no gipsy, flaunting
  Finery while his poor helpmate grubs:
Coin I've stored, and you won't be wanting:
  You shan't beg from the troughs and tubs.
Nobly you've stuck to me, though in his kitchen
  Many a Marquis would hail you Cook!
Palaces you could have ruled and grown rich in,
  But your old Jerry you never forsook.

Hand up the chirper! ripe ale winks in it;
  Let's have comfort and be at peace,
Once a stout draught made me light as a linnet.
  Cheer up! the Lord must have his lease.
May be—for none see in that black hollow—
  It's just a place where we're held in pawn,
And, when the Great Juggler makes as to swallow,
  It's just the sword-trick—I ain't quite gone.

Yonder came smells of the gorse, so nutty,
Gold-like and warm: it's the prime of May.
Better than mortar, brick, and putty,
Is God's house on a blowing day.
Lean me more up the mound; now I feel it;
All the old heath-smells! Ain't it strange?
There's the world laughing, as if to conceal it!
But He's by us, juggling the change.

I mind it well, by the sea-beach lying,
Once—it's long gone—when two gulls we beheld,
Which, as the moon got up, were flying
Down a big wave that sparked and swelled.
Crack went a gun; one fell: the second
Wheeled round him twice, and was off for new luck:
There in the dark her white wing beckon'd;—
Give me a kiss—I'm the bird dead-struck!

THE CROWN OF LOVE

O MIGHT I load my arms with thee,
Like that young lover of Romance
Who loved and gained so gloriously
The fair Princess of France!

Because he dared to love so high,
He, bearing her dear weight, shall speed
To where the mountain touched on sky:
So the proud king decreed.

Unhalting he must bear her on,
Nor pause a space to gather breath,
And on the height she will be won;—
And she was won in death!

Red the far summit flames with morn,
  While in the plain a glistening Court
Surrounds the king who practised scorn
  Through such a mask of sport.

She leans into his arms; she lets
  Her lovely shape be clasped: he fares.
God speed him whole! The knights make bets:
  The ladies lift soft prayers.

O have you seen the deer at chase?
  O have you seen the wounded kite?
So boundingly he runs the race,
  So wavering grows his flight.

—My lover! linger here, and slake
  Thy thirst, or me thou wilt not win.
—See'st thou the tumbled heavens? they break!
  They beckon us up and in.

—Ah, hero-love! unloose thy hold:
  O drop me like a curséd thing.
—See'st thou the crowded swards of gold?
  They wave to us Rose and Ring.

—O death-white mouth! O cast me down!
  Thou diest? Then with thee I die.
—See'st thou the angels with their Crown?
  We twain have reached the sky.

THE OLD CHARTIST

Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!
  So there's my answer to the judges, clear,
I'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb;

I don't know how to cheat, nor how to leer:
I'm for the nation!
That's why you see me by the wayside here,
Returning home from transportation.

It's Summer in her bath this morn, I think.
I'm fresh as dew, and chirpy as the birds:
And just for joy to see old England wink
Thro' leave again, I could harangue the herds:
Isn't it something
To speak out like a man when you've got words,
And prove you're not a stupid dumb thing?

They shipped me off for it: I'm here again.
Old England is my dam, whate'er I be.
Says I, I'll tramp it home, and see the grain:
If you see well, you're king of what you see:
Eyesight is having,
If you're not given, I said, to gluttony.
Such talk to ignorance sounds as raving.

You dear old brook, that from his Grace's park
Come bounding! on you run near my old town:
My lord can't lock the water; nor the lark,
Unless he kills him, can my lord keep down.
Up, is the song-note!
I've tried it, too:—for comfort and renown,
I rather pitched upon the wrong note.

I'm not ashamed: Not beaten's still my boast:
Again I'll rouse the people up to strike.
But home's where different politics jar most.
Respectability the women like.
This form, or that form—

The Government may be hungry pike,
  But don't you mount a Chartist platform!

Well, well! Not beaten—spite of them, I shout;
  And my estate is suffering for the Cause.—
Now, what is yon brown water-rat about,
  Who washes his old poll with busy paws?
    What does he mean by 't?
It's like defying all our natural laws,
  For him to hope he'll get clean by 't.

His seat is on a mud-bank, and his trade
  Is dirt:—he's quite contemptible; and yet
The fellow's all as anxious as a maid
  To show a decent dress, and dry the wet.
    Now it's his whisker,
And now his nose, and ear; he seems to get
  Each moment at the motion brisker!

To see him squat like little chaps at school,
  I could let fly a laugh with all my might.
He peers, hangs both his fore-paws: bless that fool,
  He's bobbing at his frill now! what a sight!
    Licking the dish up,
As if he thought to pass from black to white,
  Like parson into lawny bishop.

The elms and yellow reed-flags in the sun,
  Look on quite grave:—the sunlight flecks his side:
And links of bindweed-flowers round him run,
  And shine up doubled with him in the tide.
    I'm nearly splitting,
But nature seems like seconding his pride,
  And thinks that his behavior's fitting.

That isle o' mud looks baking dry with gold.
His needle-muzzle still works out and in.
It really is a wonder to behold,
And makes me feel the bristles of my chin.
Judged by appearance,
I fancy of the two I'm nearer Sin,
And might as well commence a clearance.

And that's what my fine daughter said:—she meant:
Pray hold your tongue, and wear a Sunday face.
Her husband, the young linendraper, spent
Much argument thereon:—I'm their disgrace.
Bother the couple!
I feel superior to a chap whose place
Commands him to be neat and supple.

But if I go and say to my old hen:
I'll mend the gentry's boots, and keep discreet,
Until they grow too violent,—why, then,
A warmer welcome I might chance to meet:
Warmer and better.
And if she fancies her old cock is beat,
And drops upon her knees—so let her!

She suffered for me:—women, you'll observe,
Don't suffer for a Cause, but for a man,
When I was in the dock she showed her nerve:
I saw beneath her shawl my old tea-can
Trembling . . . she brought it
To screw me for my work: she loathed my plan,
And therefore doubly kind I thought it.

I've never lost the taste of that same tea:
That liquor on my logic floats like oil,

When I state facts, and fellows disagree,
For human creatures all are in a coil;
All may want pardon.
I see a day when every pot will boil
Harmonious in one great Tea-garden!

We wait the setting of the Dandy's day,
Before that time!—He's furbishing his dress—
He will be ready for it!—and I say
That yon old dandy rat amid the cress,—
Thanks to hard labor!—
If cleanliness is next to godliness,
The old fat fellow's heaven's neighbor!

You teach me a fine lesson, my old boy!
I've looked on my superiors far too long.
And small has been my profit as my joy.
You've done the right while I've denounced the wrong.
Prosper me later!
Like you I will despise the sniggering throng,
And please myself and my Creator.

I'll bring the linendraper and his wife
Some day to see you; taking off my hat.
Should they ask why, I'll answer: in my life
I never found so true a democrat.
Base occupation
Can't rob you of your own esteem, old rat!
I'll preach you to the British nation.

MARIAN

I

She can be as wise as we,
And wiser when she wishes;
She can knit with cunning wit,
And dress the homely dishes,
She can flourish staff or pen,
And deal a wound that lingers;
She can talk the talk of men,
And touch with thrilling fingers.

II

Match her ye across the sea,
Natures fond and fiery;
Ye who zest the turtle's nest
With the eagle's eyrie.
Soft and loving is her soul,
Swift and lofty soaring;
Mixing with its dove-like dole
Passionate adoring.

III

Such a she who'll match with me?
In flying or pursuing,
Subtle wiles are in her smiles
To set the world a-wooing.
She is steadfast as a star,
And yet the maddest maiden:
She can wage a gallant war,
And give the peace of Eden.

LOVE IN THE VALLEY

Under yonder beech-tree single on the green-sward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

. . . . .

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

. . . . .

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.

No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.
Deals she an unkindness, 't is but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown evejar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

. . . . .

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
Brave is her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy, happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with bloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with colour, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.

Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

. . . . .

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

. . . . .

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odours and for colour,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

. . . . . .

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
Streaming like a willow grey in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbour lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones:
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honied field-rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

. . . . . .

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine

Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-grey leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

. . . . .

This I may know: her dressing and undressing
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder
Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders
White sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes

Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

. . . . .

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy
Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys
from school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tiptoe,
Said, 'I will kiss you'; she laughed and leaned her
cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

. . . . .

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripe-
ness!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
  Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
  Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.
Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree
  Gazes in this whiteness; nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
  Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

. . . . .

Gossips count her faults: they scour a narrow chamber
  Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
'When she was a tiny,' one aged woman quavers,
  Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learnt to run and tumbled:
  Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
  Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,
  Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;
  Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
  Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
  Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

. . . . .

Soon will she lie like a white-frost sunrise.
  Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
  Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.

Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-fields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

. . . . .

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
I would speak my heart out: heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October;
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam:
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

THE LARK ASCENDING

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;

A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardour, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live
Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,

Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward

That trembling into fulness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in mornings prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads.
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin;
And every face to watch him raised
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instills,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labour in the town;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains

He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns,
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet:
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord

With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard
In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aerial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsoured
He knew thy sons. He probed from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflowered
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honeyed corner at his lips,
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh
We feel is thine: broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture! thence thy songs, that winnow chaff
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last leaves
Whirl, if they have no response—they enforced
To fatten Earth when from her soul divorced.

How smiles he at a generation ranked
In gloomy noddings over life! They pass.
Not he to feed upon a breast unthanked,
Or eye a beauteous face in a cracked glass.

But he can spy that little twist of brain
Which moved some weighty leader of the blind
Unwitting 'twas the goad of personal pain,
To view in curt eclipse our Mother's mind,
And show us of some rigid harridan
The wretched bondmen till the end of time.
O lived the Master now to paint us Man,
That little twist of brain would ring a chime
Of whence it came and what it caused, to start
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.

THE WISDOM OF ELD

We *spend our lives in learning pilotage,*
And grow good steersmen when the vessel's crank!
Gap-toothed he spake, and with a tottering shank
Sidled to gain the sunny bench of Age.
It is the sentence which completes that stage;
A testament of wisdom reading blank.
The seniors of the race, on their last plank,
Pass mumbling it as nature's final page.
These, bent by such experience, are the band
Who captain young enthusiasts to maintain
What things we view, and Earth's decree withstand,
Lest dreaded Change, long dammed by dull decay,
Should bring the world a vessel steered by brain,
And ancients musical at close of day.

EARTH'S PREFERENCE

Earth loves her young: a preference manifest:
She prompts them to her fruits and flower-beds;
Their beauty with her choicest interthreads,
And makes her revel of their merry zest;
As in our East much were it in our West,

If men had risen to do the work of heads.
Her gabbling grey she eyes askant, nor treads
The ways they walk; by what they speak oppressed.
How wrought they in their zenith? 'Tis not writ;
Not all; yet she by one sure sign can read:
Have they but held her laws and nature dear,
They mouth no sentence of inverted wit.
More prizes she her beasts than this high breed
Wry in the shape she wastes her milk to rear.

ON HEARING THE NEWS FROM VENICE
(The Death of Robert Browning)

Now dumb is he who waked the world to speak,
And voiceless hangs the world beside his bier.
Our words are sobs, our cry of praise a tear:
We are the smitten mortal, we the weak.
We see a spirit on Earth's loftiest peak
Shine, and wing hence the way he makes more clear:
See a great Tree of Life that never sere
Dropped leaf for aught that age or storms might wreak.
Such ending is not Death: such living shows
What wide illumination brightness sheds
From one big heart, to conquer man's old foes:
The coward, and the tyrant, and the force
Of all those weedy monsters raising heads
When Song is murk from springs of turbid source.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

1830 Born in London; sister of D. G. Rossetti.

1850 Published first verses in *The Germ.* In naïve simplicity she was, perhaps, the best representative of the Pre-Raphælite Brotherhood ideals.

1862 Published *Goblin Market and Other Poems.*

1866 *The Prince's Progress* appeared.

1881 Published *A Pageant and Other Poems.*

1894 Died in London.

Religious devotion dominated the whole of Miss Rossetti's uneventful life; as she grew older she more and more withdrew and barred herself from the world, applying herself to humble acts of charity.

VANITY OF VANITIES

Ah, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
  Ah, woe is me for glory that is past:
  Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain!
So saith the sinking heart; and so again
  It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
  Is blown, making the sun and moon aghast
And showering down the stars like sudden rain.
And evermore men shall go fearfully
  Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
  And strong men shall rise up in weariness;
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly
  Saying one to another: How vain it is!

SONG

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:

Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;

I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain:

And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

DREAM LAND

Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain;

She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
Till time shall cease:
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.

BY THE WATER

There are rivers lapsing down
Lily-laden to the sea:
Every lily is a boat
For bees, one, two, or three:
I wish there were a fairy boat
For you, my friend, and me.

And if there were a fairy boat
And if the river bore us,
We should not care for all the past
Nor all that lies before us,
Not for the hopes that buoyed us once,
Nor for the fears that tore us.

We would rock upon the river
Scarcely floating by,
Rocking, rocking like the lilies,
You, my friend, and I:
Rocking like the stately lilies
Beneath the statelier sky.

But ah where is that river
  Whose hyacinth banks descend
Down to the sweeter lilies
  Till soft their shadows blend
Into a watery twilight?—
  And ah where is my friend?

DOWNCAST

These roses are as perfect as of old,
  Those lilies wear their selfsame sunny white;
I, only I, am changed and sad and cold.
  The morning star still glorifies the night,
And musical that fountain in its swell
  Casts as of old its waters to the light.
Oh that I were a rose, so I might dwell
  Contented in a garden on my thorn,
Fulfilling mine appointed fragrance well;
  Or stainless lily in the summer morn—
Though no man pluck it, yet the honey-bee
  Knows it for sweetness in its bosom born.
Or that I were a star, from sea to sea
  Guiding the seekers to their port of rest,
Guiding them till night's shuffling shadows flee;
  Or that I were a spring to which, opprest
With desert drought, some wearied wayfarer
  Comes from the barren regions of the West.
Then should I stand at peace, and should not err,
  Or lighten and make beautiful the sky,
Or make more glad than frankincense and myrrh.
  But now it is not so: I, only I,
Am changed and sad and cold, while in my soul
  The very fountain of delight is dry.

A BIRTHDAY

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves, and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves, and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

A PEAL OF BELLS

Strike the bells wantonly,
Tinkle tinkle well
Bring me wine, bring me flowers,
Ring the silver bell.
All my lamps burn scented oil,
Hung on laden orange-trees,
Whose shadowed foliage is the foil
To golden lamps and oranges.
Heap my golden plates with fruit,
Golden fruit, fresh-plucked and ripe;
Strike the bells and breathe the pipe;
Shut out showers from summer hours—

Silence that complaining lute—
Shut out thinking, shut out pain,
From hours that cannot come again.

Strike the bell solemnly,
Ding dong deep:
My friend is passing to his bed,
Fast asleep;
There's plaited linen round his head,
While foremost go his feet—
His feet that cannot carry him.
My feast's a show, my lights are dim;

Be still, your music is not sweet,—
There is no music more for him.
His lights are out, his feast is done:
His bowl that sparkled to the brim
Is drained, is broken, cannot hold;
My blood is chill, his blood is cold;
His death is full, and mine begun.

AT HOME

When I was dead, my spirit turned
To seek the much-frequented house.
I passed the door and saw my friends
Feasting beneath green orange boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.
Said one: 'To-morrow we shall be

Plod plod along the featureless sands,
And coasting miles and miles of sea.'
Said one: 'Before the turn of tide
We will achieve the eyrie-seat.'
Said one: 'To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet.'

'To-morrow,' said they, strong with hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
'To-morrow,' cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon;
I, only I, had passed away:
'To-morrow and to-day,' they cried;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth:
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

PARADISE: IN A DREAM

Once in a dream I saw the flowers
That bud and bloom in Paradise;
More fair they are than waking eyes
Have seen in all this world of ours.
And faint the perfume-bearing rose,
And faint the lily on its stem,
And faint the perfect violet
Compared with them.

I heard the songs of Paradise:
  Each bird sat singing in his place;
  A tender song so full of grace
It soared like incense to the skies.
Each bird sat singing to his mate
  Soft cooing notes among the trees:
The nightingale herself were cold
    To such as these.

I saw the fourfold River flow,
  And deep it was, with golden sand;
  It flowed between a mossy land
Which murmured music grave and low.
It hath refreshment for all thirst,
  For fainting spirits strength and rest:
Earth holds not such a draught as this
    From east to west.

The Tree of Life stood budding there,
  Abundant with its twelvefold fruits;
  Eternal sap sustains its roots,
Its shadowing branches fill the air.
Its leaves are healing for the world,
  Its fruit the hungry world can feed.
Sweeter than honey to the taste
    And balm indeed.

I saw the gate called Beautiful;
  And looked, but scarce could look, within;
  I saw the golden streets begin,
And outskirts of the glassy pool.
Oh harps, oh crowns of plenteous stars,
  Oh green palm-branches many-leaved—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
    Nor heart conceived.

I hope to see these things again,
  But not as once in dreams by night;
  To see them with my very sight,
And touch, and handle, and attain:
To have all Heaven beneath my feet
  For narrow way that once they trod;
To have my part with all the Saints,
    And with my God.

JAMES THOMSON

JAMES THOMSON

1834 Born at Port Glasgow, the son of an officer in the merchant service. After the death of his father and mother, he was educated at the Royal Caledonian Asylum. Became an assistant-teacher at the Military Asylum, Chelsea, and later went to Ballincollig, near Cork.

1851 Became the friend of Charles Bradlaugh; met and won the love of Matilda Weller.

1853 Matilda Weller died; her death proved a great shock to Thomson who never forgot his love for her.

1854–62 Military teacher in Devonshire, Dublin, Aldershot, Jersey, and Portsmouth. Was dismissed from the army service for minor irregularities. During this time he was publishing poems and articles in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* and in Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* under the signature B. V. or Bysshe Vanolis (in memory of Shelley and Novalis).

1866 Lived in poverty in London except for short trips to Colorado in 1872 as secretary of a mining company and to Spain in 1873 as a reporter.

1874 Published *The City of Dreadful Night* in *The National Reformer.*

1875 Became estranged from Charles Bradlaugh; contributed to *The Secularist* and *Cope's Tobacco Plant.*

1882 Died in University College Hospital, London, and was buried without religious ceremony.

A REQUIEM

Thou hast lived in pain and woe,
Thou hast lived in grief and fear;
Now thine heart can dread no blow,
Now thine eyes can shed no tear:
  Storms round us shall beat and rave;
  Thou art sheltered in the grave.

Thou for long, long years hast borne,
Bleeding through Life's wilderness,
Heavy loss and wounding scorn;
Now thine heart is burdenless:
  Vainly rest for ours we crave;
  Thine is quiet in the grave.

We must toil with pain and care,
We must front tremendous Fate,
We must fight with dark Despair;
Thou dost dwell in solemn state,
  Couched triumphant, calm and brave,
  In the ever-holy grave.

MATER TENEBRARUM

I

In the endless nights, from my bed, where sleepless in anguish I lie
I startle the stillness and gloom with a bitter and strong cry:
O Love! O Belovèd long lost! come down from thy Heaven above,

For my heart is wasting and dying in uttermost famine
for love!
Come down for a moment! oh, come! Come serious and
mild
And pale, as thou wert on this earth, thou adorable
Child!
Or come as thou art, with thy sanctitude, triumph and
bliss,
For a garment of glory about thee; and give me one
kiss,
One tender and pitying look of thy tenderest eyes,
One word of solemn assurance and truth that the soul
with its love never dies!

II

In the endless nights, from my bed, where sleepless in
frenzy I lie,
I cleave through the crushing gloom with a bitter and
deadly cry:
Oh! where have they taken my Love from our Eden of
bliss on this earth,
Which now is a frozen waste of sepulchral and hor-
rible dearth?
Have they killed her indeed? is her soul as her body,
which long
Has mouldered away in the dust where the foul worms
throng?
O'er what abhorrent Lethes, to what remotest star,
Is she rapt away from my pursuit through cycles and
systems far?
She is dead, she is utterly dead; for her life would
hear and speed
To the wild imploring cry of my heart that cries in its
dreadful need.

III

In the endless nights, on my bed, where sleeplessly brooding I lie,
I burden the heavy gloom with a bitter and weary sigh:
No hope in this worn-out world, no hope beyond the tomb;
No living and loving God, but blind and stony Doom.
Anguish and grief and sin, terror, disease and despair
Why throw not off this life, this garment of torture I wear,
And go down to sleep in the grave in everlasting rest?
What keeps me yet in this life, what spark in my frozen breast?
A fire of dread, a light of hope, kindled, O Love, by thee;
For thy pure and gentle and beautiful soul, it must immortal be.

WILLIAM BLAKE

He came to the desert of London town
Grey miles long;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
Singing a quiet song.

He came to the desert of London town,
Mirk miles broad;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
Ever alone with God.

There were thousands and thousands of human kind
In this desert of brick and stone:
But some were deaf and some were blind,
And he was there alone.

At length the good hour came; he died
As he had lived, alone:
He was not missed from the desert wide,
Perhaps he was found at the Throne.

From SUNDAY UP THE RIVER

VI

I LOVE this hardy exercise,
This strenuous toil of boating:
Our skiff beneath the willow lies
Half stranded and half floating.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burning sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie scene.

My shirt is of the soft red wool,
My cap is azure braided
By two white hands so beautiful,
My tie mauve purple-shaded.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and sapphire sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie scene.

Your hat with long blue streamers decked,
Your pure throat crimson-banded;
White-robed, my own white dove unflecked,
Dove-footed, lilac-handed.
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of white clouds and sapphire sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie scene.

If any boaters boating past
Should look where we're reclining,
They'll say, To-day green willows glassed
Rubies and sapphires shining!
As I lie, as I lie,
Glimpses dazzle of the blue and burning sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
Faerie Princess of the secret faerie scene.

VII

Grey clouds come puffing from my lips
And hang there softly curling,
While from the bowl now leaps, now slips,
A steel-blue thread high twirling.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss serene.

I gaze on you and I am crowned,
A Monarch great and glorious,
A Hero in all realms renowned,
A Faerie Prince victorious.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss serene.

Your violet eyes pour out their whole
Pure light in earnest rapture;
Your thoughts come dreaming through my soul,
And nestle past recapture.
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath the sky;

As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss serene.

O friends, your best years to the oar
Like galley-slaves devoting,
This is and shall be evermore
The true sublime of boating!
As I lie, as I lie,
The hours fold their wings beneath the sky;
As you lean, as you lean,
In that trance of perfect love and bliss serene.

XV

Give a man a horse he can ride,
Give a man a boat he can sail;
And his rank and wealth, his strength and health,
On sea nor shore shall fail.

Give a man a pipe he can smoke,
Give a man a book he can read;
And his home is bright with a calm delight,
Though the room be poor indeed.

Give a man a girl he can love,
As I, O my love, love thee;
And his heart is great with the pulse of Fate,
At home, on land, on sea.

XVII

Let my voice ring out and over the earth,
Through all the grief and strife,
With a golden joy in a silver mirth:
Thank God for Life!

Let my voice swell out through the great abyss
To the azure dome above,
With a chord of faith in the harp of bliss:
Thank God for Love!

Let my voice thrill out beneath and above,
The whole world through;
O my Love and Life, O my Life and Love,
Thank God for you!

From THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT

PROEM

Lo, THUS, as prostrate, "In the dust I write
My heart's deep languor and my soul's sad tears."
Yet why evoke the spectres of black night
To blot the sunshine of exultant years?
Why disinter dead faith from smouldering hidden?
Why break the seals of mute despair unbidden,
And wail life's discords into careless ears?

Because a cold rage seizes one at whiles
To show the bitter old and wrinkled truth
Stripped naked of all vesture that beguiles,
False dreams, false hopes, false masks and modes of youth;
Because it gives some sense of power and passion
In helpless impotence to try to fashion
Our woe in living words howe'er uncouth.

Surely I write not for the hopeful young,
Or those who deem their happiness of worth,
Or such as pasture and grow fat among
The shows of life and feel nor doubt nor dearth,

Or pious spirits with a God above them
To sanctify and glorify and love them,
Or sages who foresee a heaven on earth.

For none of these I write, and none of these
Could read the writing if they deigned to try:
So may they flourish, in their due degrees,
On our sweet earth and in their unplaced sky.
If any cares for the weak words here written,
It must be some one desolate, Fate-smitten,
Whose faith and hope are dead, and who would die.

Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;
"I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

O sad Fraternity, do I unfold
Your dolorous mysteries shrouded from of yore?
Nay, be assured; no secret can be told
To any who divined it not before:
None uninitiate by many a presage
Will comprehend the language of the message,
Although proclaimed aloud for evermore.

I

The City is of Night; perchance of Death,
But certainly of Night; for never there
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant breath
After the dewy dawning's cold grey air;
The moon and stars may shine with scorn or pity;

The sun has never visited that city,
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

Dissolveth like a dream of night away;
Though present in distempered gloom of thought
And deadly weariness of heart all day.
But when a dream night after night is brought
Throughout a week, and such weeks few or many
Recur each year for several years, can any
Discern that dream from real life in aught?

For life is but a dream whose shapes return,
Some frequently, some seldom, some by night
And some by day, some night and day: we learn,
The while all change and many vanish quite,
In their recurrence with recurrent changes
A certain seeming order; where this ranges
We count things real; such is memory's might.

A river girds the city west and south,
The main north channel of a broad lagoon,
Regurging with the salt tides from the mouth;
Waste marshes shine and glister to the moon
For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;
Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,
Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest
Which swells out two leagues from the river marge.
A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,
Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,
Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;
And eastward rolls the shipless sea's unrest.

The city is not ruinous, although
  Great ruins of an unremembered past,
With others of a few short years ago
  More sad, are found within its precincts vast.
The street-lamps always burn; but scarce a casement
In house or palace front from roof to basement
  Doth glow or gleam athwart the mirk air cast.

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,
  Amidst the soundless solitudes immense
Of rangèd mansions dark and still as tombs.
  The silence which benumbs or strains the sense
Fulfils with awe the soul's despair unweeping:
Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping,
  Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!

Yet as in some necropolis you find
  Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead,
So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind
  Like tragic masks of stone. With weary tread,
Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander,
Or sit foredone and desolately ponder
  Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head.

Mature men chiefly, few in age or youth,
  A woman rarely, now and then a child:
A child! If here the heart turns sick with ruth
  To see a little one from birth defiled,
Or lame or blind, as preordained to languish
Through youthless life, think how it bleeds with anguish
  To meet one erring in that homeless wild.

They often murmur to themselves, they speak
  To one another seldom, for their woe

Broods maddening inwardly and scorns to wreak
  Itself abroad; and if at whiles it grow
To frenzy which must rave, none heeds the clamour,
Unless there waits some victim of like glamour,
  To rave in turn, who lends attentive show.

The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
  There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
  A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain
Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,
Or which some moments' stupor but increases,
  This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
  One certitude while sane they cannot leave,
One anodyne for torture and despair;
  The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
  That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.

VIII

While I still lingered on that river-walk,
  And watched the tide as black as our black doom,
I heard another couple join in talk,
  And saw them to the left hand in the gloom
Seated against an elm bole on the ground,
Their eyes intent upon the stream profound.

"I never knew another man on earth
  But had some joy and solace in his life,
  Some chance of triumph in the dreadful strife:
My doom has been unmitigated dearth."

"We gaze upon the river, and we note
The various vessels large and small that float,
Ignoring every wrecked and sunken boat."

"And yet I asked no splendid dower, no spoil
Of sway or fame or rank or even wealth;
But homely love with common food and health,
And nightly sleep to balance daily toil."

"This all-too humble soul would arrogate
Unto itself some signalising hate
From the supreme indifference of Fate!"

"Who is most wretched in this dolorous place?
I think myself; yet I would rather be
My miserable self than He, than He
Who formed such creatures to His own disgrace.

"The vilest thing must be less vile than Thou
From whom it had its being, God and Lord!
Creator of all woe and sin! abhorred,
Malignant and implacable! I vow

"That not for all Thy power furled and unfurled,
For all the temples to Thy glory built,
Would I assume the ignominious guilt
Of having made such men in such a world."

"As if a Being, God or Fiend, could reign,
At once so wicked, foolish, and insane,
As to produce men when He might refrain!

"The world rolls round, for ever like a mill;
It grinds out death and life and good and ill;
It has no purpose, heart or mind or will.

"While air of Space and Time's full river flow
The mill must blindly whirl unresting so;
It may be wearing out, but who can know?

"Man might know one thing were his sight less dim;
That it whirls not to suit his petty whim,
That it is quite indifferent to him.

"Nay, does it treat him harshly as he saith?
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath,
Then grinds him back into eternal death."

WILLIAM MORRIS

WILLIAM MORRIS

1834 Born at Walthamstow.

1845–51 Marlborough College.

1852 Entered Exeter College, Oxford. Was captivated by the romance of the Middle Ages. In 1854 was on the point of joining the Catholic Church. Became the friend of Burne-Jones, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Kingsley. 1855, thought of establishing monastery for his friends and himself.

1856 Founded *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* to which members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood contributed. Became articled to G. E. Street, an architect. Decided to become an artist and helped (1857) to decorate the walls and ceilings of the new Debating Hall in the Oxford Union.

1858 Published *The Defense of Guenevere and Other Poems.*

1859 Married Miss Jane Burden whom he had met while decorating the Oxford Union.

1861 Helped to found the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company for the manufacture of all kinds of home furniture and decorations. In it were associated Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, and Philip Webb.

1866 Began writing *The Earthly Paradise;* 1867, published *Life and Death of Jason.* 1867–70, published three volumes of *The Earthly Paradise.*

1871 Acquired and moved to Kelmscott Manor House, near Lechlade.

1872 Published *Love is Enough;* 1876, *Sigurd the Volsung.*

1879 Became interested in Socialism; 1884, joined the Socialistic League; 1888, published *A Dream of John Ball.*

1883 Made Honorary Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.

1890 Founded Kelmscott Press for the publishing of artistic books; 1896, published the famous *Chaucer.*

1896 Died in London.

RIDING TOGETHER

For many, many days together
The wind blew steady from the East;
For many days hot grew the weather,
About the time of our Lady's Feast.

For many days we rode together,
Yet met we neither friend nor foe;
Hotter and clearer grew the weather,
Steadily did the East wind blow.

We saw the trees in the hot, bright weather,
Clear-cut, with shadows very black,
As freely we rode on together
With helms unlaced and bridles slack.

And often as we rode together,
We, looking down the green-bank'd stream,
Saw flowers in the sunny weather,
And saw the bubble-making bream.

And in the night lay down together,
And hung above our heads the rood,
Or watch'd night-long in the dewy weather,
The while the moon did watch the wood.

Our spears stood bright and thick together,
Straight out the banners stream'd behind,
As we gallop'd on in the sunny weather,
With faces turn'd towards the wind.

Down sank our threescore spears together,
As thick we saw the pagans ride;
His eager face in the clear fresh weather,
Shone out that last time by my side.

Up the sweep of the bridge we dash'd together,
It rock'd to the crash of the meeting spears,
Down rain'd the buds of the dear spring weather,
The elm-tree flowers fell like tears.

There, as we roll'd and writhed together,
I threw my arms above my head,
For close by my side, in the lovely weather,
I saw him reel and fall back dead.

I and the slayer met together,
He waited the death-stroke there in his place,
With thoughts of death, in the lovely weather,
Gapingly mazed at my madden'd face.

Madly I fought as we fought together;
In vain: the little Christian band
The pagans drown'd, as in stormy weather,
The river drowns low-lying land.

They bound my blood-stain'd hands together,
They bound his corpse to nod by my side:
Then on we rode, in the bright March weather,
With clash of cymbals did we ride.

We ride no more, no more together;
My prison-bars are thick and strong,
I take no heed of any weather,
The sweet Saints grant I live not long.

THE CHAPEL IN LYONESS

Sir Ozana le Cure Hardy. Sir Galahad. Sir Bors de Ganys

Sir Ozana. All day long and every day,
From Christmas-Eve to Whit-Sunday,
Within that Chapel-aisle I lay,
And no man came a-near.

Naked to the waist was I,
And deep within my breast did lie,
Though no man any blood could spy,
The truncheon of a spear.

No meat did ever pass my lips
Those days. Alas! the sunlight slips
From off the gilded parclose, dips,
And night comes on apace.

My arms lay back behind my head;
Over my raised-up knees was spread
A samite cloth of white and red;
A rose lay on my face.

Many a time I tried to shout;
But as in dream of battle-rout,
My frozen speech would not well out;
I could not even weep.

With inward sigh I see the sun
Fade off the pillars one by one,
My heart faints when the day is done,
Because I cannot sleep.

Sometimes strange thoughts pass through my head;
Not like a tomb is this my bed,
Yet oft I think that I am dead;
That round my tomb is writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
A true knight he was found."

Ah! me, I cannot fathom it. [*He sleeps.*

Sir Galahad. All day long and every day,
Till his madness pass'd away,
I watch'd Ozana as he lay
Within the gilded screen.

All my singing moved him not;
As I sung my heart grew hot,
With the thought of Launcelot
Far away, I ween.

So I went a little space
From out the chapel, bathed my face
In the stream that runs apace
By the churchyard wall.

There I pluck'd a faint wild rose,
Hard by where the linden grows,
Sighing over silver rows
Of the lilies tall.

I laid the flower across his mouth;
The sparkling drops seem'd good for drouth;

He smiled, turn'd round towards the south,
Held up a golden tress.

The light smote on it from the west;
He drew the covering from his breast,
Against his heart that hair he pressed;
Death him soon will bless.

Sir Bors. I enter'd by the western door;
I saw a knight's helm lying there;
I raised my eyes from off the floor,
And caught the gleaming of his hair.

I stept full softly up to him;
I laid my chin upon his head;
I felt him smile; my eyes did swim,
I was so glad he was not dead.

I heard Ozana murmur low
"There comes no sleep nor any love."
But Galahad stoop'd and kiss'd his brow:
He shiver'd; I saw his pale lips move.

Sir Ozana. There comes no sleep nor any love;
Ah me! I shiver with delight.
I am so weak I cannot move;
God move me to thee, dear, to-night!
Christ help! I have but little wit:
My life went wrong; I see it writ,

"Ozana of the hardy heart,
Knight of the Table Round,
Pray for his soul, lords, on your part;
A good knight he was found."

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Now I begin to fathom it. [*He dies.*

Sir Bors. Galahad sits dreamily:
What strange things may his eyes see,
Great blue eyes fix'd full on me?
On his soul, Lord, have mercy.

Sir Galahad. Ozana, shall I pray for thee?
Her cheek is laid to thine;
No long time hence, also I see
Thy wasted fingers twine

Within the tresses of her hair
That shineth gloriously,
Thinly outspread in the clear air
Against the jasper sea.

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right, such great lords; still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever; which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half-hour you said:
'God help! heaven's color, the blue;' and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you would then roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, gloriously lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmastime
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

"Son of King Ban of Benwick, seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme:

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down: Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold, my judges, then the cloths were brought;
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love;
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven?
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed, yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast,

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting:

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With wary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound: why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen: in that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away,

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before: and now so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps:
Gauwaine, be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy, how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So: let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde,* for so
All good knights held it after, saw:
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw.
. . . . . .
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said:
'Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

" 'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

" 'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young: 'At least,'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it and swung it; that was all the fight;

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all his wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes
Wept all away to gray, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously color'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof?—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel, come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said, 'Come'? There was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said: . . .

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will: what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine, all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happen'd these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

THE GILLIFLOWER OF GOLD

A GOLDEN gilliflower to-day
I wore upon my helm alway,
And won the prize of this tourney.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

However well Sir Giles might sit,
His sun was weak to wither it,
Lord Miles's blood was dew on it:
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Although my spear in splinters flew,
From John's steel-coat, my eye was true;
I wheel'd about, and cried for you,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Yea, do not doubt my heart was good,
Though my sword flew like rotten wood,
To shout, although I scarcely stood,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

My hand was steady too, to take
My axe from round my neck, and break
John's steel-coat up for my love's sake.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée—

When I stood in my tent again,
Arming afresh, I felt a pain

Take hold of me, I was so fain—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée—

To hear *Honneur aux fils des preux!*
Right in my ears again, and shew
The gilliflower blossom'd new.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

The Sieur Guillaume against me came,
His tabard bore three points of flame
From a red heart; with little blame—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée,—

Our tough spears crackled up like straw;
He was the first to turn and draw
His sword, that had nor speck nor flaw;
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

But I felt weaker than a maid,
And my brain, dizzied and afraid,
Within my helm a fierce tune play'd,
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée,

Until I thought of your dear head,
Bow'd to the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red;
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Crash! how the swords met: *giroflée!*
The fierce tune in my helm would play,
La belle! la belle! jaune giroflée!
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

Once more the great swords met again:
"La belle! la belle!" but who fell then?

Le Sieur Guillaume, who struck down ten;
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

And as with mazed and unarm'd face,
Toward my own crown and the Queen's place,
They led me at a gentle pace,—
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée,—

I almost saw your quiet head
Bow'd o'er the gilliflower bed,
The yellow flowers stain'd with red.
Hah! hah! la belle jaune giroflée.

SHAMEFUL DEATH

THERE were four of us about that bed;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely gray.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here;
I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
And my hair is all turn'd gray,
But I met Sir John of the Fen,
Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE EVE OF CRÉCY

Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dress'd and pleasantly;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet;
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet,
And the golden kirtle round my sweet:
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me! I have never touch'd her hand;
When the arrière-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood:
Sir Lambert du Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my poor varlets grumble and drink

In my desolate hall, where the fires sink,—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite,—

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance
Before the eyes of Philip of France;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite—

That folks may say: Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood.
St. Ives, for Lambert of the Wood!
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE SAILING OF THE SWORD

Across the empty garden-beds,
When the Sword went out to sea,
I scarcely saw my sisters' heads
Bowed each beside a tree.
I could not see the castle-leads,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Alicia wore a scarlet gown,
When the Sword went out to sea,
But Ursula's was russet brown:
For the mist we could not see
The scarlet roofs of the good town,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Green holly in Alicia's hand,
When the Sword went out to sea;
With sere oak-leaves did Ursula stand;
O! yet alas for me!
I did but bear a peel'd white wand,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Oh, russet brown and scarlet bright,
When the Sword went out to sea,
My sisters wore; I wore but white:
Red, brown, and white, are three;
Three damozels; each had a knight,
When the Sword went out to sea.

Sir Robert shouted loud, and said,
When the Sword went out to sea,
'Alicia, while I see thy head,
What shall I bring for thee?'

'Oh, my sweet lord, a ruby red:'
The Sword went out to sea.

Sir Miles said, while the sails hung down,
When the Sword went out to sea,
'Oh, Ursula! while I see the town,
What shall I bring for thee?'
'Dear knight, bring back a falcon brown:'
The Sword went out to sea.

But my Roland, no word he said
When the Sword went out to sea,
But only turn'd away his head,—
A quick shriek came from me:
'Come back, dear lord, to your white maid;'—
The Sword went out to sea.

The hot sun bit the garden-beds,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Beneath an apple-tree our heads
Stretched out toward the sea;
Grey gleam'd the thirsty castle-leads,
When the Sword came back from sea.

Lord Robert brought a ruby red,
When the Sword came back from sea;
He kissed Alicia on the head:
'I am come back to thee;
'Tis time, sweet love, that we were wed,
Now the Sword is back from sea!'

Sir Miles he bore a falcon brown,
When the Sword came back from sea;
His arms went round tall Ursula's gown,—
'What joy, O love, but thee?

Let us be wed in the good town,
Now the Sword is back from sea!'

My heart grew sick, no more afraid,
When the Sword came back from sea;
Upon the deck a tall white maid
Sat on Lord Roland's knee;
His chin was press'd upon her head,
When the Sword came back from sea!

THE WIND

Ah! no, no, it is nothing, surely nothing at all,
Only the wild-going wind round by the garden-wall,
For the dawn just now is breaking, the wind beginning to fall.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit, and think and think of the days gone by,
Never moving my chair for fear the dogs should cry,
Making no noise at all while the flambeau burns awry.
For my chair is heavy and carved, and with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon grin out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies, with a deep gash cut in the rind.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange will roll out far,

And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a
wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those who went last month
to the war.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

So I will sit and think of love that is over and past,
O! so long ago—yes, I will be quiet at last;
Whether I like it or not, a grim half-slumber is cast
Over my worn old brains, that touches the roots of
my heart,
And above my half-shut eyes the blue roof 'gins to
part,
And show the blue spring sky, till I am ready to start
From out of the green-hung chair; but something keeps
me still,
And I fall in a dream that I walk'd with her on the
side of a hill,
Dotted—for was it not spring?—with tufts of the
daffodil.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And Margaret as she walk'd held a painted book in
her hand;
Her finger kept the place; I caught her, we both did
stand
Face to face, on the top of the highest hill in the land.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away
from me,
While the flush went out of her face as her head fell
back on a tree,
And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see;

And still I held to her arms till her shoulder touch'd my
mail,
Weeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should
prevail,
And her hair went over my robe, like a gold flag over
a sail.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

I kiss'd her hard by the ear, and she kiss'd me on the
brow,
And then lay down on the grass, where the mark on
the moss is now,
And spread her arms out wide while I went down
below.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

And then I walk'd for a space to and fro on the side of
the hill,
Till I gather'd and held in my arms great sheaves of the
daffodil,
And when I came again my Margaret lay there still.

I piled them high and high above her heaving breast,
How they were caught and held in her loose ungirded
vest!

But one beneath her arm died, happy so to be prest!
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Again I turn'd my back and went away for an hour;
She said no word when I came again, so, flower by flower,
I counted the daffodils over, and cast them languidly lower.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,
Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain,
And on to us both there fell from the sun-shower drops of rain.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

Alas! alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast,
Blood lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest,
Blood lay upon her arm where the flower had been prest.

I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,
The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;
And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war.

I knew them by the arms that I was used to paint
Upon their long thin shields; but the colours were all
grown faint,
And faint upon their banner was Olaf, king and saint.
Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

THE BLUE CLOSET

The Damozels

Lady Alice, Lady Louise,
Between the wash of the tumbling seas
We are ready to sing, if so ye please;
So lay your long hands on the keys;
Sing, *'Laudate pueri.'*

And ever the great bell overhead
Boom'd in the wind a knell for the dead,
Though no one toll'd it, a knell for the dead.

Lady Louise

Sister, let the measure swell
Not too loud; for you sing not well
If you drown the faint boom of the bell;
He is weary, so am I.

And ever the chevron overhead
Flapp'd on the banner of the dead;
(Was he asleep, or was he dead?)

Lady Alice

Alice the Queen, and Louise the Queen,
Two damozels wearing purple and green,

Four lone ladies dwelling here
From day to day and year to year;
And there is none to let us go;
To break the locks of the doors below,
Or shovel away the heaped-up snow;
And when we die no man will know
That we are dead; but they give us leave,
Once every year on Christmas-eve,
To sing in the Closet Blue one song;
And we should be so long, so long,
If we dared, in singing; for dream on dream,
They float on in a happy stream;
Float from the gold strings, float from the keys,
Float from the open'd lips of Louise;
But, alas! the sea-salt oozes through
The chinks of the tiles of the Closet Blue;

And ever the great bell overhead
Booms in the wind a knell for the dead,
The wind plays on it a knell for the dead.

[*They sing all together*]

How long ago was it, how long ago,
He came to this tower with hands full of snow?
'Kneel down, O love Louise, kneel down,' he said,
And sprinkled the dusty snow over my head.

He watch'd the snow melting, it ran through my hair,
Ran over my shoulders, white shoulders and bare.

'I cannot weep for thee, poor love Louise,
For my tears are all hidden deep under the seas;

'In a gold and blue casket she keeps all my tears,
But my eyes are no longer blue, as in old years;

'Yea, they grow grey with time, grow small and dry,
I am so feeble now, would I might die.'

And in truth the great bell overhead
Left off his pealing for the dead,
Perchance, because the wind was dead.

Will he come back again, or is he dead?
O! is he sleeping, my scarf round his head?

Or did they strangle him as he lay there,
With the long scarlet scarf I used to wear?

Only I pray thee, Lord, let him come here!
Both his soul and his body to me are most dear.

Dear Lord, that loves me, I wait to receive
Either body or spirit this wild Christmas-eve.

Through the floor shot up a lily red,
With a patch of earth from the land of the dead,
For he was strong in the land of the dead.

What matter that his cheeks were pale,
His kind kiss'd lips all grey?
'O love Louise, have you waited long?'
'O my lord Arthur, yea.'

What if his hair that brush'd her cheek
Was stiff with frozen rime?
His eyes were grown quite blue again,
As in the happy time.

'O love Louise, this is the key
Of the happy golden land!

O sisters, cross the bridge with me,
My eyes are full of sand.
What matter that I cannot see,
If ye take me by the hand?'

And ever the great bell overhead,
And the tumbling seas mourn'd for the dead;
For their song ceased, and they were dead.

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS

Had she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises.
Ah me! she had but little ease;

And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup; all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.
So then
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one;
At Poictiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after us."
But: "O!" she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,

And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.
Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off:
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and: "No!"
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there was nothing else to say,
And everything was settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands;
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do

To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"
A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help: ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."

"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know?" "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you:
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'
Eh!—gag me Robert! sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it. So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"
So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face

Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert, both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor gray lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.
With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

TWO RED ROSES ACROSS THE MOON

THERE was a lady lived in a hall,
Large of her eyes and slim and tall;
And ever she sung from noon to noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

There was a knight came riding by
In early spring, when the roads were dry;
And he heard that lady sing at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Yet none the more he stopp'd at all,
But he rode a-gallop past the hall;
And left that lady singing at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

Because, forsooth, the battle was set,
And the scarlet and blue had got to be met,
He rode on the spur till the next warm noon:
Two red roses across the moon.

But the battle was scatter'd from hill to hill,
From the windmill to the watermill;

And he said to himself, as it near'd the noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

You scarce could see for the scarlet and blue,
A golden helm or a golden shoe:
So he cried, as the fight grew thick at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon!

Verily then the gold bore through
The huddled spears of the scarlet and blue;
And they cried, as they cut them down at the noon,
Two red roses across the moon!

I trow he stopp'd when he rode again
By the hall, though draggled sore with the rain;
And his lips were pinch'd to kiss at the noon
Two red roses across the moon.

Under the may she stoop'd to the crown,
All was gold, there was nothing of brown,
And the horns blew up in the hall at noon,
Two red roses across the moon.

NEAR AVALON

A SHIP with shields before the sun,
Six maidens round the mast,
A red-gold crown on every one,
A green gown on the last.

The fluttering green banners there
Are wrought with ladies' heads most fair,
And a portraiture of Guenevere
The middle of each sail doth bear.

A ship which sails before the wind,
And round the helm six knights,
Their heaumes are on, whereby, half blind,
They pass by many sights.

The tatter'd scarlet banners there,
Right soon will leave the spear-heads bare,
Those six knights sorrowfully bear,
In all their heaumes some yellow hair.

PRAISE OF MY LADY

My lady seems of ivory
Forehead, straight nose, and cheeks that be
Hollow'd a little mournfully.
Beata mea Domina!

Her forehead, overshadow'd much
By bows of hair, has a wave such
As God was good to make for me.
Beata mea Domina!

Not greatly long my lady's hair,
Nor yet with yellow colour fair,
But thick and crisped wonderfully:
Beata mea Domina!

Heavy to make the pale face sad,
And dark, but dead as though it had
Been forged by God most wonderfully
—Beata mea Domina!—

Of some strange metal, thread by thread,
To stand out from my lady's head,
Not moving much to tangle me.
Beata mea Domina!

Beneath her brows the lids fall slow,
The lashes a clear shadow throw
Where I would wish my lips to be.
Beata mea Domina!

Her great eyes, standing far apart,
Draw up some memory from her heart,
And gaze out very mournfully;
—Beata mea Domina!—

So beautiful and kind they are,
But most times looking out afar,
Waiting for something, not for me.
Beata mea Domina!

I wonder if the lashes long
Are those that do her bright eyes wrong,
For always half tears seem to be
—Beata mea Domina!—

Lurking below the underlid,
Darkening the place where they lie hid—
If they should rise and flow for me!
Beata mea Domina!

Her full lips being made to kiss,
Curl'd up and pensive each one is;
This makes me faint to stand and see.
Beata mea Domina!

Her lips are not contented now,
Because the hours pass so slow
Towards a sweet time: (pray for me),
—Beata mea Domina!—

Nay, hold thy peace! for who can tell;
But this at least I know full well,
Her lips are parted longingly,
—Beata mea Domina!—

So passionate and swift to move,
To pluck at any flying love,
That I grow faint to stand and see.
Beata mea Domina!

Yea! there beneath them is her chin,
So fine and round, it were a sin
To feel no weaker when I see
—Beata mea Domina!—

God's dealings; for with so much care
And troublous, faint lines wrought in there,
He finishes her face for me.
Beata mea Domina!

Of her long neck what shall I say?
What things about her body's sway,
Like a knight's pennon or slim tree
—Beata mea Domina!—

Set gently waving in the wind;
Or her long hands that I may find
On some day sweet to move o'er me?
Beata mea Domina!

God pity me though, if I miss'd
The telling, how along her wrist
The veins creep, dying languidly
—Beata mea Domina!—

Inside her tender palm and thin,
Now give me pardon, dear, wherein
My voice is weak and vexes thee.
Beata mea Domina!

All men that see her any time,
I charge you straightly in this rhyme,
What, and wherever you may be,
—Beata mea Domina!—

To kneel before her; as for me,
I choke and grow quite faint to see
My lady moving graciously.
Beata mea Domina!

IN PRISON

Wearily, drearily,
Half the day long,
Flap the great banners
High over the stone;
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song,
Bending the banner-poles.

While, all alone,
Watching the loophole's spark,
Lie I, with life all dark,
Feet tether'd, hands fetter'd
Fast to the stone,
The grim wall, square letter'd
With prison'd men's groan.

Still strain the banner-poles
Through the wind's song,

Westward the banner rolls
Over my wrong.

From THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON

A Sweet Song Sung not yet to any Man

I know a little garden close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.
And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before.
There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
The hills whose flowers ne'er fed the bee,
The shore no ship has ever seen,
Still beaten by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.
For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.
Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death

An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

From THE EARTHLY PARADISE

Prologue—An Apology

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—
—Remember me a little then I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?

Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.
Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

O foolish heart, how weak thou art!
Break, break, because thou needs must part
From thine own love, from thine own sweet!

L'Envoi

Here are we for the last time face to face,
Thou and I, Book, before I bid thee speed
Upon thy perilous journey to that place
For which I have done on thee pilgrim's weed,
Striving to get thee all things for thy need—
—I love thee, whatso time or men may say
Of the poor singer of an empty day.

Good reason why I love thee, e'en if thou
Be mocked or clean forgot as time wears on;
For ever as thy fashioning did grow,
Kind word and praise because of thee I won
From those without whom were my world all gone,
My hope fallen dead, my singing cast away,
And I set soothly in an empty day.

I love thee; yet this last time must it be
That thou must hold thy peace and I must speak,
Lest if thou babble I begin to see
Thy gear too thin, thy limbs and heart too weak,
To find the land thou goest forth to seek—
—Though what harm if thou die upon the way,
Thou idle singer of an empty day?

But though this land desired thou never reach,
Yet folk who know it mayst thou meet, or death;
Therefore a word unto thee would I teach
To answer these, who, noting thy weak breath,
Thy wandering eyes, thy heart of little faith,
May make thy fond desire a sport and play
Mocking the singer of an empty day.

That land's name, say'st thou? and the road thereto?
Nay, Book, thou mockest, saying thou know'st it not;
Surely no book of verse I ever knew
But ever was the heart within him hot
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot—
—There, now we both laugh—as the whole world may,
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and harken! Hast thou heard
That therein I believe I have a friend,
Of whom for love I may not be afeared?

It is to him indeed I bid thee wend;
Yea, he perchance may meet thee ere thou end,
Dying so far off from the hedge of bay,
Thou idle singer of an empty day!

Well, think of him, I bid thee, on the road,
And if it hap that midst of thy defeat,
Fainting beneath thy follies' heavy load,
My Master, GEOFFREY CHAUCER, thou do meet,
Then shalt thou win a space of rest full sweet;
Then be thou bold, and speak the words I say,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"O Master, O thou great of heart and tongue,
Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,
In raiment rent of stories oft besung!
But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,
And then the heart of one who held thee dear
Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay
Unto the singer of an empty day.

"For this he ever said, who sent me forth
To seek a place amid thy company:
That howsoever little was my worth,
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie;
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away;
In idle singing for an empty day.

"I have beheld him tremble oft enough
At things he could not choose but trust to me,
Although he knew the world was wise and rough;
And never did he fail to let me see
His love,—his folly and faithlessness, maybe;

And still in turn I gave him voice to pray
Such prayers as cling about an empty day.

"Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read him through,
For surely little is there left behind;
No power great deeds unnameable to do;
No knowledge for which words he may not find,
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—
—Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"Children we twain are, saith he, late made wise
In love, but in all else most childish still,
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may fill;
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill;
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

"Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through
sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent;
The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
Hung round about a little room, where play
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

"O Master, if thine heart could love us yet,
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—
—By lovers dead, who live through thee, we pray,
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

Fearest thou, Book, what answer thou mayst gain
Lest he should scorn thee, and thereof thou die?
Nay, it shall not be.—Thou mayst toil in vain,
And never draw the House of Fame anigh;
Yet he and his shall know whereof we cry,
Shall call it not ill done to strive to lay
The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day.

Then let the others go! and if indeed
In some old garden thou and I have wrought,
And made fresh flowers spring up from hoarded seed,
And fragrance of old days and deeds have brought
Back to folk weary; all was not for nought.
—No little part it was for me to play—
The idle singer of an empty day.

ERROR AND LOSS

Upon an eve I sat me down and wept,
Because the world to me seemed nowise good;
Still autumn was it, and the meadows slept,
The misty hills dreamed, and the silent wood
Seemed listening to the sorrow of my mood:
I knew not if the earth with me did grieve,
Or if it mock'd my grief that bitter eve.

Then 'twixt my tears a maiden did I see,
Who drew anigh me on the leaf-strewn grass,
Then stood and gazed upon me pitifully
With grief-worn eyes, until my woe did pass
From me to her, and tearless now I was,
And she mid tears was asking me of one
She long had sought unaided and alone.

I knew not of him, and she turned away
Into the dark wood, and my own great pain
Still held me there, till dark had slain the day,
And perished at the gray dawn's hand again;
Then from the wood a voice cried: "Ah, in vain,
In vain I seek thee, O thou bitter-sweet!
In what lone land are set thy longed-for feet?"

Then I looked up, and lo, a man there came
From midst the trees, and stood regarding me
Until my tears were dried for very shame;
Then he cried out: "O mourner, where is she
Whom I have sought o'er every land and sea?
I love her and she loveth me, and still
We meet no more than green hill meeteth hill."

With that he passed on sadly, and I knew
That these had met and missed in the dark night,
Blinded by blindness of the world untrue,
That hideth love and maketh wrong of right.
Then midst my pity for their lost delight,
Yet more with barren longing I grew weak,
Yet more I mourned that I had none to seek.

THE VOICE OF TOIL

I HEARD men saying, Leave hope and praying,
All days shall be as all have been;
To-day and to-morrow bring fear and sorrow,
The never ending toil between.

When Earth was younger mid toil and hunger,
In hope we strove, and our hands were strong;
Then great men led us, with words they fed us,
And bade us right the earthly wrong.

Go read in story their deeds and glory,
Their names amidst the nameless dead;
Turn then from lying to us slow-dying
In that good world to which they led;

Where fast and faster our iron master,
The thing we made, for ever drives,
Bids us grind treasure and fashion pleasure
For other hopes and other lives.

Where home is a hovel and dull we grovel,
Forgetting that the world is fair;
Where no babe we cherish, lest its very soul perish;
Where mirth is crime, and love a snare.

Who now shall lead us, what god shall heed us
As we lie in the hell our hands have won?
For us are no rulers but fools and befoolers,
The great are fallen, the wise men gone.

I heard men saying, Leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep;
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger,
When day breaks over dreams and sleep?

Come, shoulder to shoulder, ere the world grows older!
Help lies in nought but thee and me;
Hope is before us, the long years that bore us
Bore leaders more than men may be.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth,
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

Come, shoulder to shoulder, ere earth grows older!
The cause spreads over land and sea;
Now the world shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.

NO MASTER

Saith man to man, We've heard and known
That we no master need
To live upon this earth our own,
In fair and manly deed.
The grief of slaves long passed away
For us hath forged the chain,
Till now each worker's patient day
Builds up the House of Pain.

And we, shall we too, crouch and quail,
Ashamed, afraid of strife,
And lest our lives untimely fail
Embrace the Death in Life?
Nay, cry aloud, and have no fear,
We few against the world;
Awake, arise! the hope we bear
Against the curse is hurled.

It grows and grows—are we the same,
The feeble band, the few?
Or what are these with eyes aflame,
And hands to deal and do?
This is the host that bears the word,
"NO MASTER HIGH OR LOW"—
A lightning flame, a shearing sword,
A storm to overthrow.

THE DAY IS COMING

Come hither, lads, and harken, for a tale there is to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.

For then, laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of mine,
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall we gather the gain?
For ourselves and for each of our fellows, and no hand shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours, and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvelous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music: all those that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's; nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting? There are three words to speak;
We will it, and what is the foeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor.

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his dead shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.

TO THE MUSE OF THE NORTH

O MUSE that swayest the sad Northern Song,
Thy right hand full of smiting and of wrong,
Thy left hand holding pity; and thy breast
Heaving with hope of that so certain rest:

Thou, with the gray eyes kind and unafraid,
The soft lips trembling not, though they have said
The doom of the World and those that dwell therein.
The lips that smile not though thy children win
The fated Love that draws the fated Death.
O, borne adown the fresh stream of thy breath,
Let some word reach my ears and touch my heart,
That, if it may be, I may have a part
In that great sorrow of thy children dead
That vexed the brow, and bowed adown the head,
Whitened the hair, made life a wondrous dream,
And death the murmur of a restful stream,
But left no stain upon those souls of thine
Whose greatness through the tangled world doth shine.
O Mother, and Love and Sister all in one,
Come thou; for sure I am enough alone
That thou thine arms about my heart shouldst throw,
And wrap me in the grief of long ago.

DRAWING NEAR THE LIGHT

Lo, WHEN we wade the tangled wood,
In haste and hurry to be there,
Nought seem its leaves and blossoms good
For all that they be fashioned fair.

But looking up, at last we see
The glimmer of the open light,
From o'er the place where we would be;
Then grow the very brambles bright.

So now, amidst our day of strife,
With many a matter glad we play,
When once we see the light of life
Gleam through the tangle of to-day.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

1837 Born in London; lived most of his early life in the Isle of Wight, with occasional trips to Northumbria. Was a child of delicate health; learned to enjoy swimming and riding. Was especially fond of the ocean.

1849 Went to Eton; was an omnivorous reader.

1849–51 Began to publish in *Fraser's Magazine.* Was a youth of strong literary prejudices; liked Landor, Hugo, Mazzini, Shelley, Keats, Marlowe, Catullus, and Corneille; hated Euripides, Horace, and Racine.

1856 Matriculated at Balliol College; became acquainted with Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti whose disciple he became at once. Was a friend of John Nichol, poet and dramatist.

1864 On an extended visit to the Continent, visited Walter Savage Landor at Florence.

1865 Published *Atalanta in Calydon* and *Chastelard,* excellent for their lyrics. In general, Swinburne was weak in dramatic and narrative poetry.

1866 Published *Poems and Ballads.* Public objected, on grounds of morality, to the tone of some of the poems.

1878 *Poems and Ballads* (second series).

1879 Took up abode with a friend at Putney where he resided for the remainder of his life.

1882 Published *Tristram of Lyonesse.*

1889 *Poems and Ballads* (third series).

1896 *The Tale of Balen.*

1909 Died.

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER

1852

Push hard across the sand,
For the salt wind gathers breath;
Shoulder and wrist and hand,
Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,
The foam-heads loosen and flee;
It swells and welters and swings,
The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff
The long corn flickers and shakes;
Push, for the wind holds stiff,
And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!
While three men hold together
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,
Out with her over the sand,
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,
  The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king,
  And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,
  Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?
While three men hold together,
  The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!
  The old red shall be floated again
When the ranks that are thin shall be thinned,
  When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered
  And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
  Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep
  And the emperor halters his Kine,
While Shame is a watchman asleep
  And Faith is a keeper of swine.

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,
  Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!
While three men hold together,
  The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,
  From Cayenne to the Austrian whips;
Forth, with the rain in our hair
  And the salt sweet foam in our lips:

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,
  In the blown wet face of the sea;
While three men hold together,
  The kingdoms are less by three.

From ATALANTA IN CALYDON

WHEN THE HOUNDS OF SPRING

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
  The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
  With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
  The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
  Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
  With a clamour of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
  Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
  Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
  Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
  And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

BEFORE THE BEGINNING OF YEARS

Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the labouring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;

They breathed upon his mouth,
  They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
  For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labour and thought,
  A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
  And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
  And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
  With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
  In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
  Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
  Between a sleep and a sleep.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH)

Vicisti, Galilæe

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.

Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?
I am sick of singing; the bays burn deep and chafe; I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city, their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife: ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all, be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.

Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire.
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath:
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;

But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods!
Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees bend,
I kneel not, neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, and fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:

With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its heads as the height of the utmost stars of the air:
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past:
Ye are Gods, and behold ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to thee dead.
Of the maiden thy mother, men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;

Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odor and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down unto us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea,
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.

O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also, thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the year is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.

For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

A MATCH

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons

With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them gray,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
And grief that says what pleasure used to say;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in child-bearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee.
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night, "Would God the day were here,"
And say at dawn, "Would God the day were dead."
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle and sorrow upon thine head;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the gray above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy "It hath been,"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell,
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell.
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering,
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust;
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;
And where the red was, lo, the bloodless white,
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar,

And where day was, the likeness of the night;
This is the end of every man's desire.

ENVOI

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

RONDEL

Kissing her hair I sat against her feet,
Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet
Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes,
Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies;
With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
Kissing her hair.

Sleep were no sweeter than her face to me,
Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea;
What pain could get between my face and hers?
What new sweet thing would love not relish worse?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there,
Kissing her hair?

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

Back to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;

All things come back to her, being free,—
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year;

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be pressed
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if anything endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
Look earthward now:

Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least,
And reverent heart,
May move thee, royal and released
Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
Mix with thy name
As morning-star with evening-star
His faultless fame.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE

Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes,
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow,
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

LOVE AT SEA

We are in love's land to-day;
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May;

We are in love's hand to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our landwind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death
And joys that were:
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows
And love knows where.
We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
And manifold.
We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow
Or flowers of foam?
We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land.

Imitated from Théophile Gautier.

SAPPHICS

All the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound, and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking always, looking with necks reverted,
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills whereunder
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamor of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,

Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah, the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown for ever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song;
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho;"
Yet she turned her face from the Loves, she saw not
Tears or laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-
strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand, her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
  Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
  Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
  Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
  Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
  Lulled at the dewfall,

By the gray sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
  Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and singing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
  Hearing, to hear them.

HENDECASYLLABICS

In the month of the long decline of roses
I, beholding the summer dead before me,
Set my face to the sea and journeyed silent,
Gazing eagerly where above the sea-mark
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters
Moving tremulous under feet of angels
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,
Winds not warm with the south nor any sunshine;
Heard between them a voice of exultation,
"Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,
All the fruits of the day from all her branches
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,
All are taken away; the season wasted,
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoarfrost,
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets
When low light was upon the windy reaches

Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples
Iron blossom of frost is bound for ever."

ITYLUS

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,

Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow,
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,

The small slain body, the flowerlike face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet
Who hath remembered me? who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

ROCOCO

Take hands and part with laughter;
Touch lips and part with tears;
Once more and no more after,
Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not remeasure
The ways that left us twain;
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,
What will the mad gods do
For hate with me, I wonder,
Or what for love with you?
Forget them till November,
And dream there's April yet;
Forget that I remember,
And dream that I forget.

Time found our tired love sleeping,
And kissed away his breath;
But what should we do weeping,
Though light love sleep to death?

We have drained his lips at leisure,
  Till there's not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure,
  A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless
  Might quicken if they would;
Say that the soul is deathless;
  Dream that the gods are good;
Say March may wed September,
  And time divorce regret;
But not that you remember,
  And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places
  What love scarce lives and hears:
We have seen on fervent faces
  The pallor of strange tears:
We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
  Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
  The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover
  And time bring back to time
The name of your first lover,
  The ring of my first rhyme;
But rose-leaves of December
  The frosts of June shall fret,
The day that you remember,
  The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses
  In heaven we twain have known;

The grief of cruel kisses,
The joy whose mouth makes moan;
The pulse's pause and measure,
Where in one furtive vein
Throbs through the heart of pleasure
The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons
And love for treason's sake;
Room for the swift new seasons,
The years that burn and break,
Dismantle and dismember
Men's days and dreams, Juliette;
For love may not remember,
But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,
Time withers him at root;
Bring all dead things and dying,
Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
Where, crushed by three days' pressure,
Our three days' love lies slain;
And earlier leaf of pleasure,
And latter flower of pain.

Breathe close upon the ashes,
It may be flame will leap;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
Lift up the lids, and weep.
Light love's extinguished ember,
Let one tear leave it wet
For one that you remember
And ten that you forget.

EROTION

Sweet for a little even to fear, and sweet,
O love, to lay down fear at love's fair feet;
Shall not some fiery memory of his breath
Lie sweet on lips that touch the lips of death?
Yet leave me not; yet, if thou wilt, be free;
Love me no more, but love my love of thee.
Love where thou wilt, and live thy life; and I,
One thing I can, and one love cannot—die.
Pass from me; yet thine arms, thine eyes, thine hair,
Feed my desire and deaden my despair.
Yet once more ere time change us, ere my cheek
Whiten, ere hope be dumb or sorrow speak,
Yet once more ere thou hate me, one full kiss;
Keep other hours for others, save me this.
Yea, and I will not (if it please thee) weep,
Lest thou be sad; I will but sigh, and sleep.
Sweet, does death hurt? thou canst not do me wrong:
I shall not lack thee, as I loved thee, long.
Hast thou not given me above all that live
Joy, and a little sorrow shalt not give?
What even though fairer fingers of strange girls
Pass nestling through thy beautiful boy's curls
As mine did, or those curled lithe lips of thine
Meet theirs as these, all theirs come after mine;
And though I were not, though I be not, best,
I have loved and love thee more than all the rest.
O love, O lover, loose or hold me fast,
I had thee first, whoever have thee last;
Fairer or not, what need I know, what care?
To thy fair bud my blossom once seemed fair.
Why am I fair at all before thee, why
At all desired? seeing thou art fair, not I.

I shall be glad of thee, O fairest head,
Alive, alone, without thee, with thee, dead;
I shall remember while the light lives yet,
And in the night-time I shall not forget.
Though (as thou wilt) thou leave me ere life leave,
I will not, for thy love I will not, grieve;
Not as they use who love not more than I,
Who love not as I love thee though I die;
And though thy lips, once mine, be oftener prest
To many another brow and balmier breast,
And sweeter arms, or sweeter to thy mind,
Lull thee or lure, more fond thou wilt not find.

BEFORE PARTING

A MONTH or twain to live on honeycomb
Is pleasant; but one tires of scented time,
Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,
And that strong purple under juice and foam
Where the wine's heart has burst;
Nor feel the latter kisses like the first.

Once yet this poor one time; I will not pray
Even to change the bitterness of it,
The bitter taste ensuing on the sweet,
To make your tears fall where your soft hair lay
All blurred and heavy in some perfumed wise
Over my face and eyes.

And yet who knows what end the scythed wheat
Makes of its foolish poppies' mouths of red?
These were not sown, these are not harvested,
They grow a month and are cast under feet
And none has care thereof,
As none has care of a divided love.

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,
Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows;
The fashion of fair temples tremulous
With tender blood and color of your throat;
I know not how love is gone out of this,
Seeing that all was his.

Love's likeness there endures upon all these:
But out of these one shall not gather love.
Day hath not strength, nor the night shade enough
To make love whole and fill his lips with ease,
As some bee-builded cell
Feels at filled lips the heavy honey swell.

I know not how this last month leaves your hair
Less full of purple color and hid spice,
And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes
Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care;
And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet
Worth patience to regret.

AN INTERLUDE

In the greenest growth of the Maytime,
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the daytime;
The spring was glad that we met.

There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet;
The breath at your lips that panted,
The pulse of the grass at your feet.

You came, and the sun came after,
And the green grew golden above;

And the flag-flowers lightened with laughter,
And the meadow-sweet shook with love.

Your feet in the full-grown grasses
Moved soft as a weak wind blows;
You passed me as April passes,
With face made out of a rose.

By the stream where the stems were slender,
Your bright foot paused at the sedge;
It might be to watch the tender
Light leaves in the springtime hedge,

On boughs that the sweet month blanches
With flowery frost of May:
It might be a bird in the branches,
It might be a thorn in the way.

I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam straight like a finger
Struck sharp through the leaves at you.

And a bird overhead sang *Follow,*
And a bird to the right sang *Here;*
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.

I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said;
By the dawn and the dewfall anointed,
You were queen by the gold on your head.

As the glimpse of a burnt-out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,

I remember, forget, and remember
What Love saw done and undone.

I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met;
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.

And May with her world in flower
Seemed still to murmur and smile
As you murmured and smiled for an hour;
I saw you turn at the stile.

A hand like a white wood-blossom
You lifted, and waved, and passed,
With head hung down to the bosom,
And pale, as it seemed, at last.

And the best and the worst of this is
That neither is most to blame
If you've forgotten my kisses
And I've forgotten your name.

BEFORE DAWN

Sweet life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her,
Then two things might live longer,
Two sweeter things than they;
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower;
Delight that lives an hour,
And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
  Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sideways now, turned colder
  Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
  And brief beyond regret:
To laugh and love together
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
  Our memories play with yet.

Ah, one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah, sweet, one sin worth sinning
  With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
  Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
  Between your throat and chin;
To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it,
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
  And it's no longer sin:

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath swift sighs that thicken,
  Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
  To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused near us unaffrighted,
  Who found and left him free;
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder,
  And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
  "Lie still, O love, lie still;"
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
  And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her cloudier tresses
  Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
  But dies before the kiss;

So hath it been, so be it;
For who shall live and flee it?
But look that no man see it
  Or hear it unaware;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him;
For all who find him lose him,
  But all have found him fair.

MADONNA MIA

Under green apple-boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My lady hath her house
  Between two bowers;
In either of the twain
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
  All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
  Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand;
In all the great green land
  None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
  Wrought with strange gold,
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;

And one strait gown of red
Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
To laugh, to gaze;
Her breasts are like white birds,
And all her gracious words
As water-grass to herds
In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical;
Her flowers are fed from all,
Her joys from these;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
And is not sad;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes;
None knows her, weak or wise,
Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands;
Though you should search all lands
Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,

Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
  Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said;
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
  And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
  And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
  In sunset lands;
This was my lady's birth;
God gave her might and mirth
And laid his whole sweet earth
  Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
  The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
  Being strong as love.

HERTHA

I AM that which began;
  Out of me the years roll;

Out of me God and man;
I am equal and Whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;
I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;

That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high?"
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?

Hath the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith,

Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,

In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off: they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark:
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or death worms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's,
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faith ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses ador'd,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, wing'd with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

TO WALT WHITMAN IN AMERICA

Send but a song oversea for us,
  Heart of their hearts who are free,
Heart of their singer, to be for us
  More than our singing can be;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror;
  Send us a song oversea!

Sweet-smelling of pine leaves and grasses,
  And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
  And tender as sun-smitten dew;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
  Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
  Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
  With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardors of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
  And hale them hearing along.

Make us, too, music, to be with us
  As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
  Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
  Whose sign did battle reform;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamors of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardor and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel

Of all that peer on the plan;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man?

One name, not twain for division;
One thing, not twain, from the birth;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the centre, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling, with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
Few pulses of hearts reaspire:
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,

It stands in the sun sublime,
In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
Wrought not of mail nor of lawn:
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
Kings, and subjects, and shame:
If the God upon you be arisen,
How should our songs be the same?
How in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
Land songs praising his name?

God is buried and dead to us,
Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom: so have they said to us,
Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears:
And a God without eyes, without ears,
Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth?

The earth-god Freedom, the lonely
Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
Nor scourged with but one life's rod:
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations;
The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
Doth it live not at heart of all things
The one God and one spirit, a purest
Life, fed from unstanchable springs?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
Name of the soul's there is none;
Surelier it labors, if slowlier,
Than the metres of star or of sun;
Slowlier than life unto breath,
Surelier than time unto death,
It moves till its labor be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
Vision of virtue and crime;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
With the stars of the world that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
Be as theirs an invariable voice,
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
With the spirit, the star, and the sod:

With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
Lives, and that only is God.

COR CORDIUM

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir;
O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

"NON DOLET"

IT DOES not hurt. She looked along the knife
Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run
Down the sheer blade; not that which had been done
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,
But that which was to do yet ere the strife
Could end for each forever, and the sun:
Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won
While pain had power upon her husband's life.
It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more
Than bride to bridegroom; how shalt thou not take

The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?
Was not thy lifeblood given for us before?
And if love's heartblood can avail thy need,
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

THE OBLATION

Ask nothing more of me, sweet,
All I can give you I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet:
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you, sweet,
Think you and breathe you and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,

Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the gray bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briars if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain;
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be pressed of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither,
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song.
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sear, and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart hand-fast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "Look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—But we?"
And the same wind sang, and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.

Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When, as they that are free now of weeping and laughter,
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again forever;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left naught living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
When the sun and the rain live, these shall be;
Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm seas dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
What bids the lips of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard;
No hound's note awakens the wildwood hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird.

SESTINA

I saw my soul at rest upon a day
As the bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
To touch its wings but not its leaves with light;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day,
Shut up with green leaves and a little light,
Because its way was as a lost star's way.
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight;
But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But he is place of pain or of delight,
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

THE YEAR OF THE ROSE

From the depths of the green garden-closes
Where the summer in darkness dozes
Till autumn pluck from his hand
An hour-glass that holds not a sand;
From the maze that a flower-belt encloses
To the stones and sea-grass on the strand
How red was the reign of the roses
Over the rose-crowned land!

The year of the rose is brief;
From the first blade blown to the sheaf,
From the thin green leaf to the gold,
It has time to be sweet and grow old,
To triumph and leave not a leaf
For witness in winter's sight
How lovers once in the light
Would mix their breath with its breath,
And its spirit was quenched not of night,
As love is subdued not of death.

In the red-rose land not a mile
Of the meadows from stile to stile,
Of the valleys from stream to stream,
But the air was a long sweet dream
And the earth was a sweet wide smile
Red-mouthed of a goddess, returned
From the sea which had borne her and burned,

That with one swift smile of her mouth
Looked full on the north as it yearned,
And the north was more than the south.

For the north, when the winter was long,
In his heart had made him a song,
And clothed it with wings of desire,
And shod it with shoon as of fire,
To carry the tale of his wrong
To the south-west wind by the sea,
That who might bear it but he
To the ears of the goddess unknown
Who waits till her time shall be
To take the world for a throne?

In the earth beneath, and above
In the heavens where her name is love,
She warms with light from her eyes
The seasons of life as they rise,
And her eyes are as eyes of a dove,
But the wings that lift her and bear
As an eagle's, and all her hair
As fire by wind's breath curled,
And her passage is song through the air,
And her presence is spring through the world.

So turned she northward and came,
And the white-thorn land was aflame
With the fires that were shed from her feet,
That the north, by her love made sweet,
Should be called by a rose-red name;
And a murmur was heard as of doves,
And a music beginning of loves

In the light that the roses made,
Such light as the music loves.
The music of man with maid.

But the days drop one upon one,
And a chill soft wind is begun
In the heart of the rose-red maze
That weeps for the roseleaf days
And the reign of the rose undone
That ruled so long in the light,
And by spirit, and not by sight,
Through the darkness thrilled with its breath,
Still ruled in the viewless night,
As love might rule over death.

The time of lovers is brief;
From the fair first joy to the grief
That tells when love is grown old,
From the warm wild kiss to the cold,
From the red to the white-rose leaf,
They have but a season to seem
As roseleaves lost on a stream
That part not and pass not apart
As a spirit from dream to dream,
As a sorrow from heart to heart.

From the bloom and the gloom that encloses
The death-bed of Love where he dozes
Till a relic be left not of sand
To the hour-glass that breaks in his hand;
From the change in the gray garden-closes
To the last stray grass of the strand,
A rain and ruin of roses
Over the red rose-land.

AVE ATQUE VALE

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
Les Fleurs du Mal

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a sleep tumultuous
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,

And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead

Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfill all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.

Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.

Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

PASTICHE

Now the days are all gone over
Of our singing, love by lover.
Days of summer-colored seas
Blown adrift, through beam and breeze.

Now the nights are all past over
Of our dreaming, dreams that hover
In a mist of fair, false things,
Nights afloat on wide wan wings.

Now the loves with faith for mother,
Now the fears which hope for brother,
Scarce are with us as strange words,
Notes from songs of last year's birds.

Now all good that comes or goes is
As the smell of last year's roses,
As the radiance in our eyes
Shot from summer's ere he dies.

Now the morning, faintlier risen
Seems no God come forth of prison,
But a bird of plume-plucked wing,
Pale with thoughts of evening.

Now hath hope, outraced in running
Given the touch up of his cunning
And the palm he thought to wear
Even to his own strong child—despair.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER

I

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
  Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
  Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be;
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee?
  Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands,
  I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
    The purplest of the prime;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands

Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers;
I send my love back to the lovely time.

II

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?
Veiled with what visions while the grey world grieves,
Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
What warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?
What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,
Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
The tender-coloured night draws hardly breath,
The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV

As sweet desire of day before the day,
  As dreams of love before the true love born,
  From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
  The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
  Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
    Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
And kindles with her own mouth's colouring
    The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

V

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
  Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
  Shall put at last the deadly days to death
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
  When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
To change the cold heart of the weary time,
  To stir and soften all the time to tears,
    Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
  With feet not swifter than those fair first years
    Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

VI

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
  One good thing youth has given and borne away;

I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's retrodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

VII

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang towards the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were;
These may'st thou not give back for ever; these,
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder:
The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night;
And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,

Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love of loving-kindness light.
Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above—
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,—
The light of little children, and their love.

DICKENS

Chief in thy generation born of men
Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
With eyes that matched the worldwide eyes of morn
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when
Reverence of age with love and labour worn,
Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen:
Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,
Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
With Shakespeare and the soft bright soul of Sterne
And Fielding's kindliest might and Goldsmith's grace;
Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

HOPE AND FEAR

Beneath the shadow of dawn's aerial cope,
With eyes enkindled as the sun's own sphere,
Hope from the front of youth in godlike cheer
Looks Godward, past the shades where blind men grope
Round the dark door that prayers nor dreams can ope,
And makes for joy the very darkness dear

That gives her wide wings play; nor dreams that fear
At noon may rise and pierce the heart of hope.
Then, when the soul leaves off to dream and yearn,
May truth first purge her eyesight to discern
What once being known leaves time no power to appal;
Till youth at last, ere yet youth be not, learn
The kind wise word that falls from years that fall—
"Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.
Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea,
the sea,
What power is in them all to praise the sun?
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.
Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.
He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.
Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

CHILDREN

Of such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
  Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
  Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
  To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
  So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
  And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
  It must be heaven indeed.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
  All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirr'd,
Welling water's winsome word,
  Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
Hearing ere its chime be done
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
  Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light

Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight
Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome roll'd
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
Laughs a child of seven.

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

If childhood were not in the world,
But only men and women grown;
No baby-locks in tendrils curled,
No baby-blossoms blown;

Though men were stronger, women fairer,
And nearer all delights in reach,
And verse and music uttered rarer
Tones of more godlike speech;

Though the utmost life of life's best hours
Found, as it cannot now find, words;
Though desert sands were sweet as flowers
And flowers could sing like birds,

But children never heard them, never
They felt a child's foot leap and run:

This were a drearier star than ever
Yet looked upon the sun.

CHILD AND POET

You send me your love in a letter,
I send you my love in a song:
Ah, child, your gift is the better,
Mine does you but wrong.

No fame, were the best less brittle,
No praise, were it wide as earth,
Is worth so much as a little
Child's love may be worth.

We see the children above us
As they might angels above:
Come back to us, child, if you love us,
And bring us your love.

A CHILD'S FUTURE

What will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is stirred
Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise are heard:
Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound;
Love may forsake us; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardor of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a toy:
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives:
Death cannot slay her: she laughs upon death and forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star:
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their sea;
Fear not at all; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

ÉTUDE RÉALISTE

I

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should Heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furl'd,
Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurl'd
A baby's hands.

Then, even as warriors grip their brands
When battle's bolt is hurl'd,
They close, clench'd hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearl'd
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world—
A baby's hands.

III

A baby's eyes ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Lies perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes.

BEFORE SUNSET

Love's twilight wanes in heaven above,
  On earth ere twilight reigns:
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,
  Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains
  "Too much, and scarce enough,"
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove
  Love's hands let slip the reins:
And while we look for light of love
  Love's twilight wanes.

THE SUNBOWS

Spray of song that springs in April, light of love that laughs through May,
Live and die and live for ever: nought of all things far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like fire away.
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter that they were;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old was there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids perpetual memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts which seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of dawn
to-day:
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling in rebound through
radiant air,
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind that
works in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight
may wellnigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colours rain from heaven,
though this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined ray
by ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till eyes
may hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the spring-
ing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed
from bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter headlands
keen and bare
Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal mem-
ory watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance the
midnight spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight in
her snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea, saith dawn,
though night say nay:
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles every-
where
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the spring-
ing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would yet the living fare.
All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward, who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the springing flames of spray.

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

The clearest eyes in all the world they read
With sense more keen and spirit of sight more true
Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew
Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,
As they the light of ages quick and dead,
Closed now, forsake us: yet the shaft that slew
Can slay not one of all the works we knew,
Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.
The works of words whose life seems lightning wrought,
And moulded of unconquerable thought,
And quickened with imperishable flame,
Stand fast and shine and smile, assured that nought
May fade of all their myriad-moulded fame,
Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's name.

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom
Time is not lord, but servant? What least part
Of all the fire that fed his living heart,
Of all the light more keen than sun dawn's bloom
That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom
And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart

Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what thou
art,
A shadow born of terror's barren womb,
That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,
To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,
That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath
Can make him less than love acclaims him now,
And hears all time sound back the word it saith?
What part hast thou then in his glory, Death?

. . . . . .

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,
Death? Hardly may we think or hope when we
Pass likewise thither where to-night is he,
Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine
And darken round such dreams as half divine
Some sunlit harbor in that starless sea
Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,
To read with him the secret of thy shrine.
There too, as here, may song, delight, and love,
The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,
Fulfil with joy the splendor of the sky
Till all beneath wax bright as all above:
But none of all that search the heavens, and try
The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

Among the wondrous ways of men and time
He went as one that ever found and sought
And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought
To illume with instance of its fire sublime
The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.
No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,

No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
No love more lovely than the snows are white.
No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
But he might hear, interpret, or illume
With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

What secret thing of splendor or of shade
Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein
Man, led of love and life and death and sin,
Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,
Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade
Of that full soul that had for aim to win
Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,
Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade?
O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee
That he might know not of in spirit, and see
The heart within the heart that seems to strive,
The life within the life that seems to be,
And hear through all thy storms that whirl and drive,
The living sound of all men's souls alive?

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.
But never death for him was dark or dread:
"Look forth" he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,
All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
As all that lives of all that once was he
Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
Who, seeing the sunset-colored waters roll,
Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,

Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
And life and death but shadows of the soul.

ENGLAND: AN ODE

I

Sea and strand, and a lordlier land than sea-tides rolling and rising sun
Clasp and lighten in climes that brighten with day when day that was here is done,
Call aloud on their children, proud with trust that future and past are one.

Far and near from the swan's nest here the stormbirds bred of her fair white breast,
Sons whose home was the sea-wave's foam, have borne the fame of her east and west;
North and south has the storm-wind's mouth rung praise of England and England's quest.

Fame, wherever her flag flew, never forbore to fly with an equal wing:
France and Spain with their warrior train bowed down before her as thrall to king;
India knelt at her feet, and felt her sway more fruitful of life than spring.

Darkness round them as iron bound fell off from races of elder name,
Slain at sight of her eyes, whose light bids freedom lighten and burn as flame;
Night endures not the touch that cures of kingship tyrants, and slaves of shame.

All the terror of time, where error and fear were lords
of a world of slaves,
Age on age in resurgent rage and anguish darkening
as waves on waves,
Fell or fled from a face that shed such grace as quickens
the dust of graves.

Things of night at her glance took flight: the strengths
of darkness recoiled and sank:
Sank the fires of the murderous pyres whereon wild
agony writhed and shrank:
Rose the light of the reign of right from gulfs of years
that the darkness drank.

Yet the might of her wings in flight, whence glory
lightens and music rings,
Loud and bright as the dawn's, shall smite and still
the discord of evil things,
Yet not slain by her radiant reign, but darkened now
by her sail-stretched wings.

II

Music made of change and conquest, glory born of evil
slain,
Stilled the discord, slew the darkness, bade the lights
of tempest wane,
Where the deathless dawn of England rose in sign that
right should reign.

Mercy, where the tiger wallowed mad and blind with
blood and lust,
Justice, where the jackal yelped and fed, and slaves al-
lowed it just,

Rose as England's light on Asia rose, and smote them
down to dust.

Justice bright as mercy, mercy girt by justice with her
sword,
Smote and saved and raised and ruined, till the tyrant-
ridden horde
Saw the lightning fade from heaven and knew the sun
for God and lord.

Where the footfall sounds of England, where the smile
of England shines,
Rings the tread and laughs the face of freedom, fair
as hope divines
Days to be, more brave than ours and lit by lordlier
stars for signs.

All our past acclaims our future: Shakespeare's voice
and Nelson's hand,
Milton's faith and Wordsworth's trust in this our chosen
and chainless land,
Bear us witness: come the world against her, England
yet shall stand.

Earth and sea bear England witness if he lied who
said it; he
Whom the winds that ward her, waves that clasp, and
herb and flower and tree
Fed with English dews and sunbeams, hail as more
than man may be.

No man ever spake as he that bade our England be but
true,
Keep but faith with England fast and firm, and none
should bid her rue;

None may speak as he: but all may know the sign that
Shakespeare knew.

III

From the springs of the dawn, from the depths of the
noon, from the heights of the night that shine,
Hope, faith, and remembrance of glory that found but
in England her throne and her shrine,
Speak louder than song may proclaim them, that here is
the seal of them set for a sign.

And loud as the sea's voice thunders applause of the
land that is one with the sea
Speaks Time in the ear of the people that never at
heart was not inly free
The word of command that assures us of life, if we will
but that life shall be;

If the race that is first of the races of men who behold
unashamed the sun
Stand fast and forget not the sign that is given of the
years and the wars that are done,
The token that all who are born of its blood should in
heart as in blood be one.

The word of remembrance that lightens as fire from
the steeps of the storm-lit past
Bids only the faith of our fathers endure in us, firm
as they held it fast;
That the glory which was from the first upon England
alone may endure to the last.

That the love and the hate may change not, the faith
may not fade, nor the wrath nor scorn,

That shines for her sons and that burns for her foemen as fire of the night or the morn:
That the births of her womb may forget not the sign of the glory wherein they were born.

A light that is more than the sunlight, an air that is brighter than morning's breath,
Clothes England about as the strong sea clasps her, and answers the word that it saith;
The word that assures her of life if she change not, and choose not the ways of death.

Change darkens and lightens around her, alternate in hope and in fear to be:
Hope knows not if fear speak truth, nor fear whether hope be not blind as she:
But the sun is in heaven that beholds her immortal, and girdled with life by the sea.

THOMAS HARDY

THOMAS HARDY

1840 Born in Dorsetshire. Attended local schools and, for a while, King's College, London.

1856 Apprenticed to an architect—designer of churches.

1863 Won prize offered by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

1871 Turned to literature; published novels: 1871, *Desperate Remedies;* 1872, *Under the Greenwood Tree;* 1878, *The Return of the Native;* 1891, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles;* 1895, *Jude the Obscure.*

1898 Published first book of poems: *Wessex Poems.*

1901 Published *Poems of the Past and Present.*

1904, 6, 8 Published *The Dynasts.*

1919 *Collected Poems* appeared.

1922 *Late Lyrics and Earlier* was published.

From 1874 to 1928 Hardy lived in Dorsetshire, the famous setting of his novels.

1928 Died.

GOD-FORGOTTEN

I TOWERED far, and lo! I stood within
The presence of the Lord Most High,
Sent thither by the sons of Earth, to win
Some answer to their cry.

—"The Earth, sayest thou? The Human race?
By Me created? Sad its lot?
Nay: I have no remembrance of such place;
Such world I fashioned not."—

—"O Lord, forgive me when I say
Thou spakest the word and made it all."—
"The Earth of men—let me bethink Me . . . Yea!
I dimly do recall

"Some tiny sphere I built long back
(Mid millions of such shapes of mine)
So named . . . It perished, surely—not a wrack
Remaining, or a sign?

"It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefor succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?"—
"Lord, it existeth still."—

"Dark, then, its life! For not a cry
Of aught it bears do I now hear;
Of its own act the threads were snapt whereby
Its plaints had reached mine ear.

"It used to ask for gifts of good,
Till came its severance, self-entailed,
When sudden silence on that side ensued,
And has till now prevailed.

"All other orbs have kept in touch;
Their voicings reach me speedily:
Thy people took upon them overmuch
In sundering them from me!

"And it is strange—though sad enough—
Earth's race should think that one whose call
Frames, daily, shining spheres of flawless stuff
Must heed their tainted ball! . . .

"But sayest it is by pangs distraught,
And strife, and silent suffering?—
Sore grieved am I that injury should be wrought
Even on so poor a thing!

"Thou shouldst have learnt that *Not to Mend*
For Me could mean but *Not to Know:*
Hence, Messengers! and straightway put an end
To what men undergo." . . .

Homing at dawn, I thought to see
One of the Messengers standing by.
—Oh, childish thought! . . . Yet often it comes to me
When trouble hovers nigh.

THE CHURCH-BUILDER

The church flings forth a battled shade
Over the moon-blanched sward;
The church; my gift; whereto I paid

My all in hand and hoard:
Lavished my gains
With stintless pains
To glorify the Lord.

I squared the broad foundations in
Of ashlared masonry;
I moulded mullions thick and thin,
Hewed fillet and ogee:
I circleted
Each sculptured head
With nimb [1] and canopy.

I called in many a craftsmaster
To fix emblazoned glass,
To figure Cross and Sepulchre
On dossal, boss, and brass.
My gold all spent,
My jewels went
To gem the cups of Mass.

I borrowed deep to carve the screen
And raise the ivoried Rood;
I parted with my small demesne
To make my owings good.
Heir-looms unpriced
I sacrificed,
Until debt-free I stood.

So closed the task. "Deathless the Creed
Here substanced!" said my soul:
"I heard me bidden to this deed,
And straight obeyed the call.
Illumine this fane,

[1] Nimbus

That not in vain
I build it, Lord of all!"

But, as it chanced me, then and there
Did dire misfortunes burst;
My home went waste for lack of care,
My sons rebelled and curst;
Till I confessed
That aims the best
Were looking like the worst.

Enkindled by my votive work
No burning faith I find;
The deeper thinkers sneer and smirk,
And give my toil no mind;
From nod and wink
I read they think
That I am fool and blind.

My gift to God seems futile, quite;
The world moves as erstwhile;
The powerful Wrong on feeble Right
Tramples in olden style.
My faith burns down,
I see no crown;
But Cares, and Griefs, and Guile.

So now, the remedy? Yea, this:
I gently swing the door
Here, of my fane—no soul to wis—
And cross the patterned floor
To the rood-screen
That stands between
The nave and inner chore.[1]

[1] Choir

The rich red windows dim the moon,
But little light need I;
I mount the prie-dieu, lately hewn
From woods of rarest dye;
Then from below
My garment, so,
I draw this cord, and tie.

One end thereof around the beam
Midway 'twixt Cross and truss.
I noose the nethermost extreme,
And in ten seconds thus
I journey hence—
To that land whence
No rumor reaches us.

Well: Here at morn they'll light on one
Dangling in mockery
Of what he spent his substance on
Blindly and uselessly! . . .
"He might," they'll say,
"Have built, some way,
A cheaper gallows-tree!"

THE DARKLING THRUSH

I LEANT upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings from broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires

The land's sharp features seemed to be
  The century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
  The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
  Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
  Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice burst forth among
  The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
  Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
  In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
  Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
  Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
  Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
  His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
  And I was unaware.

GEORGE MEREDITH

(1828-1909)

Forty years back, when much had place
That since has perished out of mind,
I heard that voice and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, turning kind.

He was of those whose wit can shake
And riddle to the very core
The counterfeits that Time will break . . .

Of late, when we two met once more,
The luminous countenance and rare
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare
His shape unseen by his green hill,
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter. Further and further still
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air
His words wing on—as live words will.

A YOUNG MAN'S EPIGRAM ON EXISTENCE

A SENSELESS school, where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live!
A dolt is he who memorizes
Lessons that leave no time for prizes.

WHEN I SET OUT FOR LYONNESSE

WHEN I set out for Lyonnesse,
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonnesse
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes!

BEENY CLIFF

March 1870—March 1913

I

O THE opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

II

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

III

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

IV

—Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

V

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is—elsewhere—whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will laugh there nevermore.

AT TEA

The kettle descants in a cosy drone,
And the young wife looks in her husband's face,
And then at her guest's, and shows in her own
Her sense that she fills an envied place;
And the visiting lady is all abloom,
And says there was never so sweet a room.

And the happy young housewife does not know
That the woman beside her was first his choice,
Till the fates ordained it could not be so . . .
Betraying nothing in look or voice
The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,
And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.

BEYOND THE LAST LAMP

Near Tooting Common

I

While rain, with eve in partnership,
Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,
Beyond the last lone lamp I passed
  Walking slowly, whispering sadly,
  Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast:
Some heavy thought constrained each face,
And blinded them to time and place.

II

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed
In mental scenes no longer orbed
By love's young rays. Each countenance
  As it slowly, as it sadly
  Caught the lamplight's yellow glance,
Held in suspense a misery
At things which had been or might be.

III

When I retrod that watery way
Some hours beyond the droop of day,

Still I found pacing there the twain
Just as slowly, just as sadly,
Heedless of the night and rain.
One could but wonder who they were,
And what wild woe detained them there.

IV

Though thirty years of blur and blot
Have slid since I beheld that spot,
And saw in curious converse there
Moving slowly, moving sadly,
That mysterious tragic pair,
Its olden look may linger on—
All but the couple; they have gone.

V

Whither? Who knows, indeed . . . And yet
To me, when nights are weird and wet,
Without those comrades there at tryst
Creeping slowly, creeping sadly,
That lone lane does not exist.
There they seem brooding on their pain,
And will, while such a lane remain.

THE OXEN

Christmas Eve and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,

Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If some one said on Christmas Eve
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

IN TIME OF "THE BREAKING OF NATIONS"

I

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

II

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass:
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

III

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.

"FOR LIFE I HAD NEVER CARED GREATLY"

For Life I had never cared greatly,
As worth a man's while;
Peradventures unsought,
Peradventures that finished in nought,
Had kept me from youth and through manhood till lately
Unwon by its style.

In earliest years—why I know not—
I viewed it askance;
Conditions of doubt,
Conditions that leaked slowly out,
May haply have bent me to stand and to show not
Much zest for its dance.

With symphonies soft and sweet colour
It courted me then,
Till evasions seemed wrong,
Till evasions gave in to its song,
And I warmed, until living aloofly loomed duller
Than life among men.

Anew I found nought to set eyes on,
When, lifting its hand,
It uncloaked a star,
Uncloaked it from fog-damps afar,
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon
As bright as a brand.

And so, the rough highway forgetting,
I pace hill and dale
Regarding the sky,
Regarding the vision on high,
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting
My pilgrimage fail.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

1849 Born at Gloucester; educated at the Crypt School.

1861 Suffered from tubercular disease; one foot had to be amputated; the other was saved through the skill of Dr. Joseph Lister of the Old Infirmary in Edinburgh.

1877 Engaged in literary, journalistic, and editorial work in London. 1878, married Miss Anna Boyle.

1880 Collaborated with Stevenson in writing plays, the best known of which are *Deacon Brodie* (1880) and *Beau Austin* (1884).

1888 *A Book of Verses* was published.

1892 *London Voluntaries* appeared.

1894 Daughter, the "Reddy" of J. M. Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy*, died.

1900 Published *For England's Sake.*

1903 Died.

From IN HOSPITAL

I

ENTER PATIENT

THE morning mists still haunt the stony street;
The northern summer air is shrill and cold;
And lo, the Hospital, grey, quiet, old,
Where Life and Death like friendly chafferers meet.
Thro' the loud spaciousness and draughty gloom
A small, strange child—so agèd yet so young!—
Her little arm besplintered and beslung,
Precedes me gravely to the waiting-room.
I limp behind, my confidence all gone.
The grey-haired soldier-porter waves me on,
And on I crawl, and still my spirits fail:
A tragic meanness seems so to environ
These corridors and stairs of stone and iron,
Cold, naked, clean—half-workhouse and half jail.

II

WAITING

A SQUARE squat room (a cellar on promotion),
Drab to the soul, drab to the very daylight;
Plasters astray in unnatural-looking tinware;
Scissors and lint and apothecary's jars.

Here, on a bench a skeleton would writhe from,
Angry and sore, I wait to be admitted:
Wait till my heart is lead upon my stomach,
While at their ease two dressers do their chores.

One has a probe—it feels to me a crowbar.
A small boy sniffs and shudders after bluestone.
A poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers.
Life is (I think) a blunder and a shame.

IV

BEFORE

Behold me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
The gods are good to me: I have no wife,
No innocent child, to think of as I near
The fateful minute; nothing all-too dear
Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.
Yet I am tremulous and a trifle sick,
And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little:
My hopes are strong, my will is something weak.
Here comes the basket? Thank you. I am ready.
But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle:
You carry Caesar and his fortunes—steady!

V

OPERATION

You are carried in a basket,
Like a carcase from the shambles,
To the theatre, a cockpit
Where they stretch you on a table.

Then they bid you close your eyelids,
And they mask you with a napkin,

And the anaesthetic reaches
Hot and subtle through your being.

And you gasp and reel and shudder
In a rushing, swaying rapture,
While the voices at your elbow
Fade—receding—fainter—farther.

Lights about you shower and tumble,
And your blood seems crystallising—
Edged and vibrant, yet within you
Racked and hurried back and forward.

Then the lights grow fast and furious,
And you hear a noise of waters,
And you wrestle, blind and dizzy,
In an agony of effort,

Till a sudden lull accepts you,
And you sound an utter darkness . . .
And awaken . . . with a struggle . . .
On a hushed, attentive audience.

VI

AFTER

Like as a flamelet blanketed in smoke,
So through the anaesthetic shows my life;
So flashes and so fades my thought, at strife
With the strong stupor that I heave and choke
And sicken at, it is so foully sweet.
Faces look strange from space—and disappear
Far voices, sudden loud, offend my ear–
And hush as sudden. Then my senses fleet

All were a blank, save for this dull, new pain
That grinds my leg and foot; and brokenly
Time and the place glimpse on to me again;
And, unsurprised, out of uncertainty,
I wake—relapsing—somewhat faint and fain,
To an immense, complacent dreamery.

VIII

STAFF-NURSE: OLD STYLE

The greater masters of the commonplace,
Rembrandt and good Sir Walter—only these
Could paint her all to you: experienced ease
And antique liveliness and ponderous grace;
The sweet old roses of her sunken face;
The depth and malice of her sly, grey eyes;
The broad Scots tongue that flatters, scolds, defies,
The thick Scots wit that fells you like a mace.
These thirty years has she been nursing here,
Some of them under Syme, her hero still.
Much is she worth, and even more is made of her.
Patients and students hold her very dear.
The doctors love her, tease her, use her skill.
They say 'The Chief' himself is half-afraid of her.

XV

'THE CHIEF' [1]

His brow spreads large and placid, and his eye
Is deep and bright, with steady looks that still.
Soft lines of tranquil thought his face fulfill—
His face at once benign and proud and shy.

[1] Sir Joseph Lister.

If envy scout, if ignorance deny,
His faultless patience, his unyielding will,
Beautiful gentleness and splendid skill,
Innumerable gratitudes reply.
His wise, rare smile is sweet with certainties,
And seems in all his patients to compel
Such love and faith as failure cannot quell.
We hold him for another Herakles,
Battling with custom, prejudice, disease,
As once the son of Zeus with Death and Hell.

XIX

SCRUBBER

She's tall and gaunt, and in her hard, sad face
With flashes of the old fun's animation
There lowers the fixed and peevish resignation
Bred of a past where troubles came apace.
She tells me that her husband, ere he died,
Saw seven of their children pass away,
And never knew the little lass at play
Out on the green, in whom he's deified.
Her kin dispersed, her friends forgot and gone,
All simple faith her honest Irish mind,
Scolding her spoiled young saint, she labors on:
Telling her dreams, taking her patients' part,
Trailing her coat sometimes: and you shall find
No rougher, quainter speech, nor kinder heart.

XXIV

SUICIDE

Staring corpselike at the ceiling,
See his harsh, unrazored features,

Ghastly brown against the pillow,
And his throat—so strangely bandaged!

Lack of work and lack of victuals,
A debauch of smuggled whisky,
And his children in the workhouse
Made the world so black a riddle.

That he plunged for a solution;
And, although his knife was edgeless,
He was sinking fast towards one,
When they came, and found, and saved him.

Stupid now with shame and sorrow,
In the night I hear him sobbing.
But sometimes he talks a little.
He has told me all his troubles.

In his face, tanned and bloodless,
White and wild his eyeballs glisten;
And his smile, occult and tragic,
Yet so slavish, makes you shudder!

APPARITION [1]

Thin-legged, thin-chested, slight unspeakably,
Neat-footed and weak-fingered: in his face—
Lean, large-boned, curved of beak, and touched with race,
Bold-lipped, rich-tinted, mutable as the sea,
The brown eyes radiant with vivacity—
There shines a brilliant and romantic grace,
A spirit intense and rare, with trace on trace
Of passion and impudence and energy.
Valiant in velvet, light in ragged luck,

[1] Robert Louis Stevenson.

Most vain, most generous, sternly critical,
Buffoon and poet, lover and sensualist:
A deal of Ariel, just a streak of Puck,
Much Antony, of Hamlet most of all,
And something of the Shorter-Catechist.

DISCHARGED

Carry me out
Into the wind and the sunshine,
Into the beautiful world.

O, the wonder, the spell of the streets!
The stature and strength of the horses,
The rustle and echo of footfalls,
The flat roar and rattle of wheels!
A swift tram floats huge on us . . .
It's a dream?
The smell of the mud in my nostrils
Blows brave—like a breath of the sea!

As of old,
Ambulant, undulant drapery,
Vaguely and strangely provocative,
Flutters and beckons. O, yonder—
Is it?—the gleam of a stocking!
Sudden, a spire
Wedged in the mist! O, the houses,
The long lines of lofty, grey houses,
Cross-hatched with shadow and light!
These are the streets . . .
Each is an avenue leading
Whither I will!

Free . . . !
Dizzy, hysterical, faint,
I sit, and the carriage rolls on with me
Into the wonderful world.

BALLADE OF DEAD ACTORS

Where are the passions they essayed,
And where the tears they made to flow?
Where the wild humours they portrayed
For laughing worlds to see and know?
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe?
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall?
And Millamant and Romeo?
Into the night go one and all.

Where are the braveries, fresh or frayed?
The plumes, the armours—friend and foe?
The cloth of gold, the rare brocade,
The mantles glittering to and fro?
The pomp, the pride, the royal show?
The cries of war and festival?
The youth, the grace, the charm, the glow?
Into the night go one and all.

The curtain falls, the play is played:
The Beggar packs beside the Beau;
The Monarch troops, and troops the Maid;
The Thunder huddles with the Snow.
Where are the revellers high and low?
The clashing swords? The lover's call?
The dancers gleaming row on row?
Into the night go one and all.

ENVOY

Prince, in one common overthrow
The Hero tumbles with the Thrall:
As dust that drives, as straws that blow,
Into the night go one and all.

DOUBLE BALLADE OF LIFE AND FATE

Fools may pine, and sots may swill,
Cynics gibe and prophets rail,
Moralists may scourge and drill,
Preachers prose, and fainthearts quail.
Let them whine, or threat, or wail!
Till the touch of Circumstance
Down to darkness sink the scale,
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

What if skies be wan and chill?
What if winds be harsh and stale?
Presently the east will thrill,
And the sad and shrunken sail,
Bellying with a kindly gale,
Bear you sunwards, while your chance
Sends you back the hopeful hail:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Idle shot or coming bill
Hapless love or broken bail,
Gulp it (never chew your pill!),
And, if Burgundy should fail,
Try the humbler pot of ale!
Over all is heaven's expanse.

Gold's to find among the shale.
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

Dull Sir Joskin sleeps his fill,
Good Sir Galahad seeks the Grail,
Proud Sir Pertinax flaunts his frill,
Hard Sir Aeger dints his mail;
And the while by hill and dale
Tristram's braveries gleam and glance,
And his blithe horn tells its tale:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Araminta's grand and shrill,
Delia's passionate and frail,
Doris drives an earnest quill,
Athanasia takes the veil:
Wiser Phyllis o'er her pail,
At the heart of all romance
Reading, sings to Stephen's flail:—
'Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.'

Every Jack must have his Jill
(Even Johnson had his Thrale!):
Forward, couples—with a will!
This, the world, is not a jail.
Hear the music, sprat and whale!
Hands across, retire, advance!
Though the doomsman's on your trail,
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

ENVOY

Boys and girls, at slug and snail
And their kindred look askance.

Pay your footing on the nail:
Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance.

WHAT IS TO COME

WHAT is to come we know not. But we know
That what has been was good—was good to show,
Better to hide, and best of all to bear.
We are the masters of the days that were:
We have lived, we have loved, we have suffered . . .
even so.

Shall we not take the ebb who had the flow?
Life was our friend. Now, if it be our foe—
Dear, though it spoil and break us!—need we care
What is to come?

Let the great winds their worst and wildest blow,
Or the gold weather round us mellow slow:
We have fulfilled ourselves, and we can dare
And we can conquer, though we may not share
In the rich quiet of the afterglow
What is to come.

O, GATHER ME THE ROSE.

O, gather me the rose, the rose,
While yet in flower we find it,
For summer smiles, but summer goes,
And winter waits behind it!

For with the dream foregone, forgone,
The deed forborne for ever,
The worm, regret, will canker on,
And Time will turn him never.

So well it were to love, my love,
And cheat of any laughter
The fate beneath us and above,
The dark before and after.

The myrtle and the rose, the rose,
The sunshine and the swallow,
The dream that comes, the wish that goes,
The memories that follow!

INVICTUS

I. M.

R. T. Hamilton Bruce
(1846-99)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll

I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

TO A. D.

The nightingale has a lyre of gold,
The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
Our hearts and lips together.

WE FLASH ACROSS THE LEVEL

We flash across the level.
We thunder thro' the bridges.
We bicker down the cuttings.
We sway along the ridges.

A rush of streaming hedges,
Of jostling lights and shadows,
Of hurtling, hurrying stations,
Of racing woods and meadows.

We charge the tunnels headlong—
The blackness roars and shatters.
We crash between embankments—
The open spins and scatters.

We shake off the miles like water,
We might carry a royal ransom;

And I think of her waiting, waiting,
And long for a common hansom.

THE PASSING

I. M.

MARGARITAE SORORI

(1886)

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, grey city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

PRO REGE NOSTRO

What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?
With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
As the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the world on your bugles blown!

Where shall the watchful Sun,
England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
England, my own?
When shall he rejoice again
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Down the years on your bugles blown?

Ever the faith endures,
England, my England:—
"Take and break us: we are yours,
"England, my own!
"Life is good, and joy runs high
"Between English earth and sky:
"Death is death; but we shall die
"To the Song on your bugles blown,
"England—
"To the stars on your bugles blown!"

They call you proud and hard,
  England, my England:
You with worlds to watch and ward,
  England, my own!
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies
You could know nor dread nor ease
  Were the Song on your bugles blown,
    England—
  Round the Pit on your bugles blown!

Mother of Ships whose might,
  England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's delight,
  England, my own,
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient Sword,
There's the menace of the Word
  In the Song on your bugles blown,
    England—
  Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850 Born in Edinburgh. Was educated at local schools and with various tutors; attended Edinburgh University 1867–73. Ill health prevented him from following his father and grandfather as a light-house engineer. Studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1875; turned to literature and strove to be a master of prose style.

1878 As a short-story writer and novelist he published numerous notable works: 1878, *An Inland Voyage;* 1879, *Travels with a Donkey;* 1881, *Virginibus Puerisque;* 1883 *Treasure Island;* 1886, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Kidnapped;* 1889 *The Master of Ballantrae.*

1879–80 Travelled to and returned from California where he married Mrs. Osbourne. During most of the remainder of his life he was a restless traveller to all parts of the world.

1885 Published *A Child's Garden of Verses.*

1887 *Underwoods* was published.

1890 Published *Ballads;* a posthumous volume of *Poems* appeared in 1918.

1890–1894 Settled at Vailima, in Samoan Islands, where he died in 1894.

From A CHILD'S GARDEN OF VERSES

TO ALISON CUNNINGHAM

From Her Boy

For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake:
For your most comfortable hand
That led me through the uneven land:
For all the story-books you read:
For all the pains you comforted:
For all you pitied, all you bore,
In sad and happy days of yore:—
My second Mother, my first Wife,
The angel of my infant life—
From the sick child, now well and old,
Take, nurse, the little book you hold!

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read
May find as dear a nurse at need,
And every child who lists my rhyme,
In the bright, fireside, nursery clime,
May hear it in as kind a voice
As made my childish days rejoice!

R. L. S.

I

BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.

In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

V

WHOLE DUTY OF CHILDREN

A CHILD should always say what's true
And speak when he is spoken to,
And behave mannerly at table;
At least as far as he is able.

VI

RAIN

THE rain is raining all around,
It falls on field and tree,
It rains on the umbrellas here,
And on the ships at sea.

IX

WINDY NIGHTS

WHENEVER the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,

All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

XII

LOOKING FORWARD

When I am grown to man's estate
I shall be very proud and great,
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.

XVI

THE LAND OF COUNTERPANE

When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden soldiers go,
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale and plain,
The pleasant land of counterpane.

XVII

THE LAND OF NOD

From breakfast on all through the day
At home among my friends I stay,
But every night I go abroad
Afar into the land of Nod.

All by myself I have to go,
With none to tell me what to do—
All alone beside the streams
And up the mountain-sides of dreams.

The strangest things are there for me,
Both things to eat and things to see,
And many frightening sights abroad
Till morning in the land of Nod.

Try as I like to find the way,
I never can get back by day,
Nor can remember plain and clear
The curious music that I hear.

XVIII

MY SHADOW

I HAVE a little shadow that goes in and out with me,
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow—
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball,
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up,
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

XXIV

HAPPY THOUGHT

THE world is so full of a number of things,
I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

XXVII

GOOD AND BAD CHILDREN

Children, you are very little,
And your bones are very brittle;
If you would grow great and stately,
You must try to walk sedately.

You must still be bright and quiet,
And content with simple diet:
And remain, through all bewild'ring,
Innocent and honest children.

Happy hearts and happy faces,
Happy play in grassy places—
That was how, in ancient ages,
Children grew to kings and sages.

But the unkind and the unruly,
And the sort who eat unduly,
They must never hope for glory—
Theirs is quite a different story!

Cruel children, crying babies,
All grew up as geese and gabies,
Hated, as their age increases,
By their nephews and their nieces.

XXXIII

THE SWING

How do you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?

Oh, I do think it the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do!

Up in the air and over the wall,
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside—

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roof so brown—
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down!

A SONG OF THE ROAD

The gauger walked with willing foot,
And aye the gauger played the flute;
And what would Master Gauger play
But *Over the hills and far away?*

Whene'er I buckle on my pack
And foot it gaily in the track
O pleasant gauger, long since dead,
I hear you fluting on ahead.

You go with me the self-same way—
The self-same air for me you play;
For I do think and so do you
It is the tune to travel to.

For who would gravely set his face
To go to this or t'other place?

There's nothing under heav'n so blue
That's fairly worth the travelling to.

On every hand the roads begin,
And people walk with zeal therein;
But wheresoe'er the highways tend,
Be sure there's nothing at the end.

Then follow you wherever hie
The travelling mountains of the sky,
Or let the streams of civil mode
Direct your choice upon the road;

For one and all, or high or low,
Will lead you where you wish to go;
And one and all go night and day
Over the hills and far away!

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

A naked house, a naked moor,
A shivering pool before the door,
A garden bare of flowers and fruit
And poplars at the garden foot:
Such is the place that I live in,
Bleak without and bare within.

Yet shall your ragged moor receive
The incomparable pomp of eve,
And the cold glories of the dawn
Behind your shivering trees be drawn;
And when the wind from place to place
Doth the unmoored cloud-galleons chase,
Your garden gloom and gleam again,
With leaping sun, with glancing rain.

Here shall the wizard moon ascend
The heavens, in the crimson end
Of day's declining splendour; here
The army of the stars appear.
The neighbour hollows dry or wet,
Spring shall with tender flowers beset;
And oft the morning muser see
Larks rising from the broomy lea,
And every fairy wheel and thread
Of cobweb dew-bediamonded.
When daisies go, shall winter time
Silver the simple grass with rime;
Autumnal frosts enchant the pool
And make the cart-ruts beautiful;
And when snow-bright the moor expands,
How shall your children clap their hands!
To make this earth our hermitage,
A cheerful and a changeful page,
God's bright and intricate device
Of days and seasons doth suffice.

TO ANDREW LANG

Dear Andrew, with the brindled hair,
Who glory to have thrown in air,
High over arm, the trembling reed,
By Ale and Kail, by Till and Tweed:
An equal craft of hand you show
The pen to guide, the fly to throw:
I count you happy-starred; for God,
When He with inkpot and with rod
Endowed you, bade your fortune lead
For ever by the crooks of Tweed,

For ever by the woods of song
And lands that to the Muse belong;
Or if in peopled streets, or in
The abhorred pedantic sanhedrin,
It should be yours to wander, still
Airs of the morn, airs of the hill,
The plovery Forest and the seas
That break about the Hebrides,
Should follow over field and plain
And find you at the window-pane;
And you again see hill and peel,
And the bright springs gush at your heel.
So went the fiat forth, and so
Garrulous like a brook you go,
With sound of happy mirth and sheen
Of daylight—whether by the green
You fare that moment, or the grey;
Whether you dwell in March or May;
Or whether treat of reels and rods
Or of the old unhappy gods:
Still like a brook your page has shone,
And your ink sings of Helicon.

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me die.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

THE CELESTIAL SURGEON

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain:—
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

BRIGHT IS THE RING OF WORDS

Bright is the ring of words
  When the right man rings them,
Fair the fall of songs
  When the singer sings them.
Still they are carolled and said—
  On wings they are carried—
After the singer is dead
  And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
  In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
  The swains together.
And when the west is red
  With the sunset embers,

The lover lingers and sings
And the maid remembers.

HOME NO MORE

(TO THE TUNE OF WANDERING WILLIE)

Home no more home to me, whither must I wander?
Hunger my driver, I go where I must.
Cold blows the winter wind over hill and heather;
This drives the rain, and my roof is in the dust.
Loved of wise men was the shade of my roof-tree,
The true word of welcome was spoken in the door—
Dear days of old, with the faces in the firelight,
Kind folks of old, you come again no more.

Home was home then, my dear, full of kindly faces,
Home was home then, my dear, happy for the child.
Fire and the windows bright glittered on the moorland,
Song, tuneful song, built a palace in the wild.
Now, when day dawns on the brow of the moorland,
Lone stands the house, and the chimney-stone is cold.
Lone let it stand, now the friends are all departed,
The kind hearts, the true hearts, that loved the place of old.

Spring shall come, come again, calling up the moor-fowl,
Spring shall bring the sun and rain, bring the bees and flowers;
Red shall the heather bloom over hill and valley,
Soft flow the stream through the even-flowing hours;
Fair the day shine as it shone on my childhood—
Fair shine the day on the house with open door;

Birds come and cry there and twitter in the chimney—
But I go for ever and come again no more.

A LAD THAT IS GONE

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Mull was astern, Rum on the port,
Egg on the starboard bow;
Glory of youth glowed in his soul:
Where is that glory now?

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Give me again all that was there,
Give me the sun that shone!
Give me the eyes, give me the soul,
Give me the lad that's gone!

Sing me a song of a lad that is gone,
Say, could that lad be I?
Merry of soul he sailed on a day
Over the sea to Skye.

Billow and breeze, islands and seas,
Mountains of rain and sun,
All that was good, all that was fair,
All that was me is gone.

HEATHER ALE

A GALLOWAY LEGEND

From the bonny bells of heather
They brewed a drink long-syne,
Was sweeter far than honey,
Was stronger far than wine.
They brewed it and they drank it,
And lay in a blessed swound
For days and days together
In their dwellings underground.

There rose a king in Scotland,
A fell man to his foes,
He smote the Picts in battle,
He hunted them like roes.
Over the miles of the red mountain
He hunted as they fled,
And strewed the dwarfish bodies
Of the dying and the dead.

Summer came in the country,
Red was the heather bell;
But the manner of the brewing
Was none alive to tell.
In graves that were like children's
On many a mountain head,
The Brewsters of the Heather
Lay numbered with the dead.

The king in the red moorland
Rode on a summer's day;
And the bees hummed, and the curlews

Cried beside the way.
The king rode, and was angry,
Black was his brow and pale,
To rule in a land of heather
And lack the Heather Ale.

It fortuned that his vassals,
Riding free on the heath,
Came on a stone that was fallen
And vermin hid beneath.
Rudely plucked from their hiding,
Never a word they spoke:
A son and his aged father—
Last of the dwarfish folk.

And the king sat high on his charger,
He looked on the little men;
And the dwarfish and swarthy couple
Looked at the king again.
Down by the shore he had them;
And there on the giddy brink—
'I will give you life, ye vermin,
For the secret of the drink.'

There stood the son and father;
And they looked high and low;
The heather was red around them,
The sea rumbled below.
And up and spoke the father,
Shrill was his voice to hear:
'I have a word in private,
A word for the royal ear.

'Life is dear to the aged,
And honor a little thing;

I would gladly sell the secret,'
  Quoth the Pict to the King.
His voice was small as a sparrow's,
  And shrill and wonderful clear:
'I would gladly sell my secret,
  Only my son I fear.

'For life is a little matter,
  And death is naught to the young;
And I dare not sell my honor
  Under the eye of my son.
Take *him,* O king, and bind him,
  And cast him far in the deep;
And it's I will tell the secret
  That I have sworn to keep.'

They took the son and bound him,
  Neck and heels in a thong,
And a lad took him and swung him,
  And flung him far and strong,
And the sea swallowed his body,
  Like that of a child of ten;—
And there on the cliff stood the father,
  Last of the dwarfish men.

'True was the word I told you:
  Only my son I feared;
For I doubt the sapling courage
  That goes without the beard.
But now in vain is the torture,
  Fire shall never avail:
Here dies in my bosom
  The secret of Heather Ale.'

CHRISTMAS AT SEA

THE sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'-wester, blowing squally off the sea;
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things a-lee.

They heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day;
But 'twas only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.
We tumbled every hand on deck instanter, with a shout,
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.

All day we tacked and tacked between the South Head and the North;
All day we hauled the frozen sheets, and got no further forth;
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head to head,

We gave the South a wider berth, for there the tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North Head close aboard:
So's we saw the cliff and houses and the breakers running high,
And the coastguard in his garden, with his glass against his eye.

The frost was on the village roofs as white as ocean foam;

The good red fires were burning bright in every long-
shore home;
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys volleyed
out;
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel went
about.

The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty
jovial cheer;
For it's just that I should tell you how (of all days in
the year)
This day of our adversity was blessèd Christmas morn,
And the house above the coastguard's was the house
where I was born.

O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces
there,
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,
Go dancing round the china plates that stand upon the
shelves.

And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was
of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went
to sea;
And O the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessèd Christ-
mas Day.

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began to fall.
"All hands to loose topgallant sails," I heard the cap-
tain call.
"By the Lord, she'll never stand it," our first mate,
Jackson, cried.

. . . "It's the one way or the other, Mr. Jackson," he replied.

She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were new and good,
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though she understood,
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the night,
We cleared the weary headland, and passed below the light.

And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on board but me,
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome out to sea;
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old.

"B

JOHN DAVIDSON

JOHN DAVIDSON

1857 Born at Barrhead, Renfrewshire.

1876–7 Educated at Edinburgh University.

1889 Went to London to practice literature; became a journalist, dramatist, and poet.

1893, 1896 Published *Fleet Street Eclogues* (first and second series).

1894–5 Published *Ballads and Songs*, in which appeared *Ballad of Hell, Ballad of Heaven, Ballad of a Nun, Thirty Bob a Week.*

1897 Published *New Ballads.*

1906 Granted a Civil List Pension.

1909 Died, by drowning, at Penzance.

THIRTY BOB A WEEK

I couldn't touch a stop and turn a screw,
  And set the blooming world a-work for me,
Like such as cut their teeth—I hope, like you—
  On the handle of a skeleton gold key;
I cut mine on a leek, which I eat it every week;
  I'm a clerk at thirty bob as you can see.

But I don't allow it's luck and all a toss;
  There's no such thing as being starred and crossed;
It's just the power of some to be a boss,
  And the bally power of others to be bossed:
I face the music, sir; you bet I ain't a cur;
  Strike me lucky if I don't believe I'm lost!

For like a mole I journey in the dark,
  A-traveling along the underground
From my Pillar'd Halls and broad Suburban Park,
  To come the daily dull official round;
And home again at night with my pipe all alight,
  A-scheming how to count ten bob a pound.

And it's often very cold and wet,
  And my missis stitches towels for a hunks;
And the Pillar'd Halls is half of it to let—
  Three rooms about the size of traveling trunks.
And we cough, my wife and I, to dislocate a sigh,
  When the noisy little kids are in their bunks.

But you never hear her do a growl or whine,
  For she's made of flint and roses, very odd;

And I've got to cut my meaning rather fine,
  Or I'd blubber, for I'm made of greens and sod:
So p'r'aps we are in Hell for all that I can tell,
  And lost and damn'd and served up hot to God.

I ain't blaspheming, Mr. Silver-tongue;
  I'm saying things a bit beyond your art:
Of all the rummy starts you ever sprung,
  Thirty bob a week's the rummiest start!
With your science and your books and your the'ries about spooks,
  Did you ever hear of looking in your heart?

I didn't mean your pocket, Mr., no:
  I mean that having children and a wife,
With thirty bob on which to come and go,
  Isn't dancing to the tabor and the fife:
When it doesn't make you drink, by Heaven! it makes you think,
  And notice curious items about life.

I step into my heart and there I meet
  A god-almighty devil singing small,
Who would like to shout and whistle in the street,
  And squelch the passers flat against the wall;
If the whole world was a cake he had the power to take,
  He would take it, ask for more, and eat them all.

And I meet a sort of simpleton beside,
  The kind that life is always giving beans;
With thirty bob a week to keep a bride
  He fell in love and married in his teens:
At thirty bob he stuck; but he knows it isn't luck:
  He knows the seas are deeper than tureens.

And the god-almighty devil and the fool
That meet me in the High Street on the strike,
When I walk about my heart a-gathering wool,
Are my good and evil angels if you like.
And both of them together in every kind of weather
Ride me like a double-seated bike.

That's rough a bit and needs its meaning curled.
But I have a high old hot un in my mind—
A most engrugious notion of the world,
That leaves your lightning 'rithmetic behind:
I give it at a glance when I say 'There ain't no chance,
Nor nothing of the lucky-lottery kind.'

And it's this way that I make it out to be
No fathers, mothers, countries, climates—none;
Not Adam was responsible for me,
Nor society, nor systems, nary one:
A little sleeping seed, I woke—I did, indeed—
A million years before the blooming sun.

I woke because I thought the time had come;
Beyond my will there was no other cause;
And everywhere I found myself at home,
Because I chose to be the thing I was;
And in whatever shape of mollusc or of ape
I always went according to the laws.

I was the love that chose my mother out;
I joined two lives and from the union burst;
My weakness and my strength without a doubt
Are mine alone forever from the first:
It's just the very same with a difference in the name
As 'Thy will be done.' You say it if you durst!

They say it daily up and down the land
As easy as you take a drink, it's true;
But the difficultest go to understand,
And the difficultest job a man can do,
Is to come it brave and meek with thirty bob a week,
And feel that that's the proper thing for you.

It's a naked child against a hungry wolf;
It's playing bowls upon a splitting wreck;
It's walking on a string across a gulf
With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck;
But the thing is daily done by many and many a one;
And we fall, face downward, fighting, on the deck.

A BALLAD OF HEAVEN

He wrought at one great work for years;
The world passed by with lofty look:
Sometimes his eyes were dashed with tears;
Sometimes his lips with laughter shook.

His wife and child went clothed in rags,
And in a windy garret starved;
He trod his measures on the flags,
And high in heaven his music carved.

Wistful he grew, but never feared;
For always on the midnight skies
His rich orchestral score appeared
In stars and zones and galaxies.

He thought to copy down his score;
The moonlight was his lamp; he said,
"Listen, my love;" but on the floor
His wife and child were lying dead.

Her hollow eyes were open wide;
He deemed she heard with special zest:
Her death's-head infant coldly eyed
The desert of her shrunken breast.

"Listen, my love: my work is done;
I tremble as I touch the page
To sign the sentence of the sun,
And crown the great eternal age.

"The slow *adagio* begins;
The winding-sheets are ravelled out
That swathe the minds of men, the sins
That wrap their rotting souls about.

"The dead are heralded along
With silver trumps and golden drums,
And flutes and oboes, keen and strong,
My brave *andante* singing comes.

"Then like a python's sumptuous dress
The frame of things is cast away,
And out of Time's obscure distress,
The thundering *scherzo* crashes Day.

"For three great orchestras I hope
My mighty music shall be scored:
On three high hills they shall have scope
With heaven's vault for a sounding-board.

"Sleep well, love; let your eyelids fall;
Cover the child; good-night, and f . . .
What? Speak . . . the traitorous end of all!
Both . . . cold and hungry . . . cold and stiff!

"But no, God means us well, I trust.
Dear ones, be happy, hope is nigh:
We are too young to fall to dust,
And too unsatisfied to die."

He lifted up against his breast
The woman's body, stark and wan;
And to her withered bosom pressed
The little skin-clad skeleton.

"You see you are alive," he cried.
He rocked them gently to and fro.
"No, no, my love, you have not died,
Nor you, my little fellow; no."

Long in his arms he strained his dead,
And crooned an antique lullaby;
Then laid them on the lowly bed,
And broke down with a doleful cry.

"The love, the hope, the blood, the brain,
Of her and me, the budding life,
And my great music—all in vain!
My unscored work, my child, my wife!

"We drop into oblivion,
And nourish some suburban sod:
My work, this woman, this my son
Are now no more: there is no God.

"The world's a dustbin; we are due,
And death's cart waits: be life accurst!"
He stumbled down beside the two,
And clasping them, his great heart burst.

Straightway he stood at heaven's gate,
  Abashed and trembling for his sin:
I trow he had not long to wait,
  For God came out and let him in.

And then there ran a radiant pair,
  Ruddy with haste and eager-eyed,
To meet him first upon the stair—
  His wife and child beatified.

They clad him in a robe of light,
  And gave him heavenly food to eat;
Great seraphs praised him to the height,
  Archangels sat about his feet.

God, smiling, took him by the hand,
  And led him to the brink of heaven:
He saw where systems whirling stand,
  Where galaxies like snow are driven.

Dead silence reigned; a shudder ran
  Through space; Time furled his wearied wings;
A slow *adagio* then began,
  Sweetly resolving troubled things.

The dead were heralded along:
  As if with drums and trumps of flame,
And flutes and oboes keen and strong,
  A brave *andante* singing came.

Then like a python's sumptuous dress,
  The frame of things was cast away,
And out of Time's obscure distress
  The conquering *scherzo* thundered Day.

He doubted; but God said, "Even so:
Nothing is lost that's wrought with tears.
The music that you made below
Is now the music of the spheres."

SONG OF A TRAIN

A MONSTER taught
To come to hand
Amain,
As swift as thought
Across the land
The Train.

The song it sings
Has an iron sound;
Its iron wings
Like wheels go round.

Crash under bridges
Flash over ridges,
And vault the downs;
The road is straight—
Nor stile, nor gate;
For milestones—towns!

Voluminous, vanishing, white,
The steam plume trails;
Parallel streaks of light,
The polished rails.

Oh, who can follow?
The little swallow,
The trout of the sky:
But the sun

Is outrun,
And time passed by.

O'er bosky dens,
By marsh and mead,
Forest and fens
Embodied speed
Is clanked and hurled;
O'er rivers and runnels;
And into the earth
And out again
In death and birth
That know no pain,
For the whole round world
Is a warren of railway tunnels.

Hark! hark! hark!
It screams and cleaves the dark;
And the subterranean night
Is gilt with smoky light.
Then out again apace
It runs its thundering race,
The monster taught
To come to hand
Amain,
That swift as thought
Speeds through the land
The Train.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

FRANCIS THOMPSON

1859 Born at Preston; a member of the Catholic Church. Thought for awhile of preparing for priesthood. Studied medicine at Owen's College.

1885 Went to London; became addicted to the opium habit; was living in the direst poverty; was rescued by Wilfrid and Alice Meynell.

1893 Published *Poems.*

1895 Published *Sister Poems.*

1897 Published *New Poems.*

1907 Died in London.

TO MONICA THOUGHT DYING

You, O the piteous you!
Who all the long night through
Anticipatedly
Disclose yourself to me
Already in the ways
Beyond our human comfortable days;
How can you deem what Death
Impitiably saith
To me, who listening wake
For your poor sake?
When a grown woman dies,
You know we think unceasingly
What things she said, how sweet, how wise;
And these do make our misery.
But you were (you to me
The dead anticipatedly!)
You—eleven years, was it not, or so?—
Were just a child, you know;
And so you never said
Things sweet immeditatably and wise
To interdict from closure my wet eyes:
But foolish things, my dead, my dead!
Little and laughable,
Your age that fitted well.
And was it such things all unmemorable,
Was it such things could make
Me sob all night for your implacable sake?

Yet, as you said to me,
In pretty make-believe of revelry,

So, the night long, said Death
With his magniloquent breath;
(And that remembered laughter,
Which in our daily uses followed after,
Was all untuned to pity and to awe):
"A cup of chocolate,
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw."
How could I know, how know
Those laughing words when drenched with sobbing so?
Another voice than yours, than yours, he hath!
My dear, wasn't worth his breath,
His mighty utterance?—yet he saith, and saith!
This dreadful Death to his own dreadfulness
Doth dreadful wrong,
This dreadful childish babble on his tongue!
That iron tongue, made to speak sentences
And wisdom insupportably complete,
Why should it only say the long night through,
In mimicry of you,—
"A cup of chocolate,
One farthing is the rate,
You drink it through a straw, a straw, a straw!"

Oh, of all sentences,
Piercingly incomplete!
Why did you teach that fatal mouth to draw,
Child, impermissible awe
From your old trivialness?
Why have you done me this
Most unsustainable wrong,
And into Death's control
Betrayed the secret places of my soul?
Teaching him that his lips,
Uttering their native earthquake and eclipse,

Could never so avail
To rend from hem to hem the ultimate veil
Of this most desolate
Spirit, and leave it stripped and desecrate,—
Nay, never so have wrung
From eyes and speech weakness unmanned, unmeet;
As when his terrible dotage to repeat
Its little lesson learneth at your feet;
As when he sits among
His sepulchres, to play
With broken toys your hand has cast away,
With derelict trinkets of the darling young.
Why have you taught—that he might so complete
His awful panoply
From your cast playthings—why,
This dreadful childish babble to his tongue,
Dreadful and sweet?

EX ORE INFANTIUM

Little Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there,*
And ask where all the angels were?

I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were;
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!

Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in heaven with all
The angels, that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee?
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?

So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair),
And say: "O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one."

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since Thou wast young!

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.

I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share

With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,

These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-stars on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed

A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—
Designer infinite!—
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),

"And human love needs human meriting
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

TO A SNOW-FLAKE

What heart could have thought you?—
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapour?—
"God was my shaper.
Passing surmisal,

He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapour,
To lust of His mind:—
Thou could'st not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,
Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost."

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

'IN NO STRANGE LAND'

O World invisible, we view thee,
O World intangible, we touch thee,
O World unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!—
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;—
Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry,—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Genesareth, but Thames!

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN

ALFRED EDWARD HOUSMAN

1859 Born. Received classical education at Oxford.
1882–1891 Was a Higher Division Clerk in the British Patent Office.
1892 Became Professor of Latin at University College, London.
1896 Published *A Shropshire Lad* which expresses, in a lighter tone, pessimism and cynicism.
1911 Became Professor of Latin at Cambridge University; has edited Juvenal and Manilius.
1922 Published *Last Poems*.

From A SHROPSHIRE LAD

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

REVEILLE

Wake: the silver dusk returning
  Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
  Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
  Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
  Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 't is late for lying:
  Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
  'Who'll beyond the hills away?'

Towns and countries woo together,
Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
'The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'T is paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue.'
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 't is true, 't is true.

Oh, when I was in love with you,
Then I was clean and brave,

And miles around the wonder grew
How well did I behave.

And now the fancy passes by,
And nothing will remain,
And miles around they'll say that I
Am quite myself again.

TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honours out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

Say, lad, have you things to do?
  Quick then, while your day's at prime,
Quick, and if 't is work for two,
  Here am I, man: now's your time.

Send me now, and I shall go;
  Call me, I shall hear you call;
Use me ere they lay me low
  Where a man's no use at all;

Ere the wholesome flesh decay,
  And the willing nerve be numb,
And the lips lack breath to say,
  'No, my lad, I cannot come.'

THE NEW MISTRESS

'Oh, *sick I am to see you, will you never let me be?*
You may be good for something but you are not good for me.
Oh, go where you are wanted, for you are not wanted here.
And that was all the farewell when I parted from my dear.

'I will go where I am wanted, to a lady born and bred,
Who will dress me free for nothing in a uniform of red;
She will not be sick to see me if I only keep it clean:
I will go where I am wanted for a soldier of the Queen.

'I will go where I am wanted, for the sergeant does not mind;
He may be sick to see me but he treats me very kind:
He gives me beer and breakfast and a ribbon for my cap,
And I never knew a sweetheart spend her money on a chap.

'I will go where I am wanted, where there's room for one or two,
And the men are none too many for the work there is to do;
Where the standing line wears thinner and the dropping dead lie thick;
And the enemies of England they shall see me and be sick.'

White in the moon the long road lies,
The moon stands blank above;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust,
Still, still the shadows stay:
My feet upon the moonlit dust
Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,
And straight though reach the track,
Trudge on, trudge on, 't will all be well,
The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies
  Far, far must it remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
  That leads me from my love.

Into my heart an air that kills
  From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
  What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
  I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
  And cannot come again.

In my own shire, if I was sad,
Homely comforters I had:
The earth, because my heart was sore,
Sorrowed for the son she bore;
And standing hills, long to remain,
Shared their short-lived comrade's pain.
And bound for the same bourn as I,
On every road I wandered by,
Trod beside me, close and dear,
The beautiful and death-struck year:
Whether in the woodland brown
I heard the beechnut rustle down,
And saw the purple crocus pale
Flower about the autumn dale;
Or littering far the fields of May
Lady-smocks a-bleaching lay,
And like a skylit water stood
The bluebells in the azured wood.

Yonder, lightening other loads,
The seasons range the country roads,
But here in London streets I ken
No such helpmates, only men;
And these are not in plight to bear,
If they would, another's care.
They have enough as 't is: I see
In many an eye that measures me
The mortal sickness of a mind
Too unhappy to be kind.
Undone with misery, all they can
Is to hate their fellow man;
And till they drop they needs must still
Look at you and wish you ill.

If it chance your eye offend you,
Pluck it out, lad, and be sound:
'T will hurt, but here are salves to friend you,
And many a balsam grows on ground.

And if your hand or foot offend you,
Cut it off, lad, and be whole;
But play the man, stand up and end you,
When your sickness is your soul.

Think no more, lad; laugh, be jolly:
Why should men make haste to die?
Empty heads and tongues a-talking
Make the rough road easy walking,
And the feather pate of folly
Bears the falling sky.

Oh, 't is jesting, dancing, drinking
Spins the heavy world around.
If young hearts were not so clever,

Oh, they would be young for ever:
Think no more; 't is only thinking
Lays lads underground

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time,
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: long since forgotten
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

RUDYARD KIPLING

RUDYARD KIPLING

1865 Born at Bombay, India. Educated at the United Services College, at Westward Ho, North Devon, England; has described his experiences there in *Stalky & Co.*

1883 Returned to India and worked on the staff of the *Civil and Military Gazette.*

1886 Published *Departmental Ditties.*

1888 Published *Plain Tales from the Hills;* other novels and volumes of short stories are: 1890, *The Light That Failed;* 1897, *Captains Courageous;* 1899, *Stalky & Co.;* 1901, *Kim;* 1902, *Just So Stories.*

1890 Settled in England.

1892 *Barrack Room Ballads.*

1896 *The Seven Seas.*

1903 *The Five Nations.*

1907 Won Nobel Prize for literature.

1918 *Inclusive Edition* of poems appeared.

1919 *The Years Between* was published.
Lives at Burwash, Sussex.

WHEN EARTH'S LAST PICTURE IS PAINTED

1892

When Earth's last picture is painted and the tubes are twisted and dried,
When the oldest colours have faded, and the youngest critic has died,
We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it—lie down for an aeon or two,
Till the Master of All Good Workmen shall put us to work anew.

And those that were good shall be happy: they shall sit in a golden chair;
They shall splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comets' hair.
They shall find real saints to draw from—Magdalene, Peter, and Paul;
They shall work for an age at a sitting and never be tired at all!

And only the Master shall praise us, and only the Master shall blame;
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his separate star,
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of Things as They are!

THE BALLAD OF EAST AND WEST

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!

Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the Border side,
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare that is the Colonel's pride:
He has lifted her out of the stable-door between the dawn and the day,
And turned the calkins upon her feet, and ridden her far away.
Then up and spoke the Colonel's son that led a troop of the Guides:
'Is there never a man of all my men can say where Kamal hides?'
Then up and spoke Mahommed Khan, the son of the Ressaldar,
'If ye know the track of the morning-mist, ye know where his pickets are.
'At dusk he harries the Abazai—at dawn he is into Bonair,
'But he must go by Fort Bukloh to his own place to fare,
'So if ye gallop to Fort Bukloh as fast as a bird can fly,
'By the favour of God ye may cut him off ere he win to the Tongue of Jagai,
'But if he be passed the Tongue of Jagai, right swiftly turn ye then,

'For the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is
sown with Kamal's men.
'There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and low
lean thorn between,
'And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a
man is seen.'
The Colonel's son has taken a horse, and a raw rough
dun was he,
With the mouth of a bell and the heart of Hell, and
the head of the gallows-tree.
The Colonel's son to the Fort has won, they bid him
stay to eat—
Who rides at the tail of a Border thief, he sits not long
at his meat.
He's up and away from Fort Bukloh as fast as he can
fly,
Till he was aware of his father's mare in the gut of the
Tongue of Jagai,
Till he was aware of his father's mare with Kamal upon
her back,
And when he could spy the white of her eye, he made
the pistol crack.
He has fired once, he has fired twice, but the whistling
ball went wide.
'Ye shoot like a soldier,' Kamal said. 'Show now if ye
can ride.'
It's up and over the Tongue of Jagai, as blown dust-
devils go,
The dun he fled like a stag of ten, but the mare like a
barren doe.
The dun he leaned against the bit and slugged his head
above,
But the red mare played with the snaffle-bars, as a
maiden plays with a glove.

There was rock to the left and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,
And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick tho' never a man was seen.
They have ridden the low moon out of the sky, their hoofs drum up the dawn,
The dun he went like a wounded bull, but the mare like a new-roused fawn.
The dun he fell at a water-course—in a woeful heap fell he,
And Kamal has turned the red mare back, and pulled the rider free.
He has knocked the pistol out of his hand—small room was there to strive,
'"T was only by favour of mine,' quoth he, 'ye rode so long alive:
'There was not a rock for twenty mile, there was not a clump of tree,
'But covered a man of my own men with his rifle cocked on his knee.
'If I had raised my bridle-hand, as I have held it low,
'The little jackals that flee so fast, were feasting all in a row:
'If I had bowed my head on my breast, as I have held it high,
'The kite that whistles above us now were gorged till she could not fly.'
Lightly answered the Colonel's son:—'Do good to bird and beast,
'But count who come for the broken meats before thou makest a feast.
'If there should follow a thousand swords to carry my bones away,
'Belike the price of a jackal's meal were more than a thief could pay.

'They will feed their horse on the standing crop, their men on the garnered grain,
'The thatch of the byres will serve their fires when all the cattle are slain.
'But if thou thinkest the price be fair,—thy brethren wait to sup,
'The hound is kin to the jackal-spawn,—howl, dog, and call them up!
'And if thou thinkest the price be high, in steer and gear and stack,
'Give me my father's mare again, and I'll fight my own way back!'
Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon his feet.
'No talk shall be of dogs,' said he, 'when wolf and gray wolf meet.
'May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath:
'What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the dawn with Death?'
Lightly answered the Colonel's son, 'I hold by the blood of my clan:
'Take up the mare for my father's gift—by God, she has carried a man!'
The red mare ran to the Colonel's son, and nuzzled against his breast,
'We be two strong men,' said Kamal then, 'but she loveth the younger best.
'So she shall go with a lifter's dower, my turquoise-studded rein,
'My broidered saddle and saddle-cloth, and silver stirrups twain.'
The Colonel's son a pistol drew and held it muzzle-end,
'Ye have taken the one from a foe,' said he; 'will ye take the mate from a friend?'

'A gift for a gift,' said Kamal straight; 'a limb for the risk of a limb.
'Thy father has sent his son to me, I'll send my son to him!'
With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from a mountain-crest—
He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest.
'Now here is thy master,' Kamal said, 'who leads a troop of the Guides,
'And thou must ride at his left side as shield on shoulder rides.
'Till Death or I cut loose the tie, at camp and board and bed,
'Thy life is his—thy fate it is to guard him with thy head.
'So thou must eat the White Queen's meat, and all her foes are thine,
'And thou must harry thy father's hold for the peace of the Border-line,
'And thou must make a trooper tough and hack thy way to power—
'Belike they will raise thee to Ressaldar when I am hanged in Peshawur.'

They have looked each other between the eyes, and there they have found no fault,
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on leavened bread and salt:
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on fire and fresh-cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife, and the Wondrous Names of God.
The Colonel's son he rides the mare and Kamal's boy the dun,

And two have come back to Fort Bukloh where there went forth but one.
And when they drew to the Quarter-Guard, full twenty swords flew clear—
There was not a man but carried his feud with the blood of the mountaineer.
'Ha' done! ha' done!' said the Colonel's son. 'Put up the steel at your sides!
'Last night ye had struck at a Border thief—to-night 't is a man of the Guides!'

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth.

IF ——

If you can keep your head when all about you
  Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
  But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
  Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
  And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
  If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
  And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
  Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
  And stoop and build 'em up with wornout tools.

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
  And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
  And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
  To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
  Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue
  Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
  If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
  With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
  And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

RECESSIONAL

God of our fathers, known of old
  Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
  Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
  The captains and the kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,

An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far called our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord!

Amen.

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